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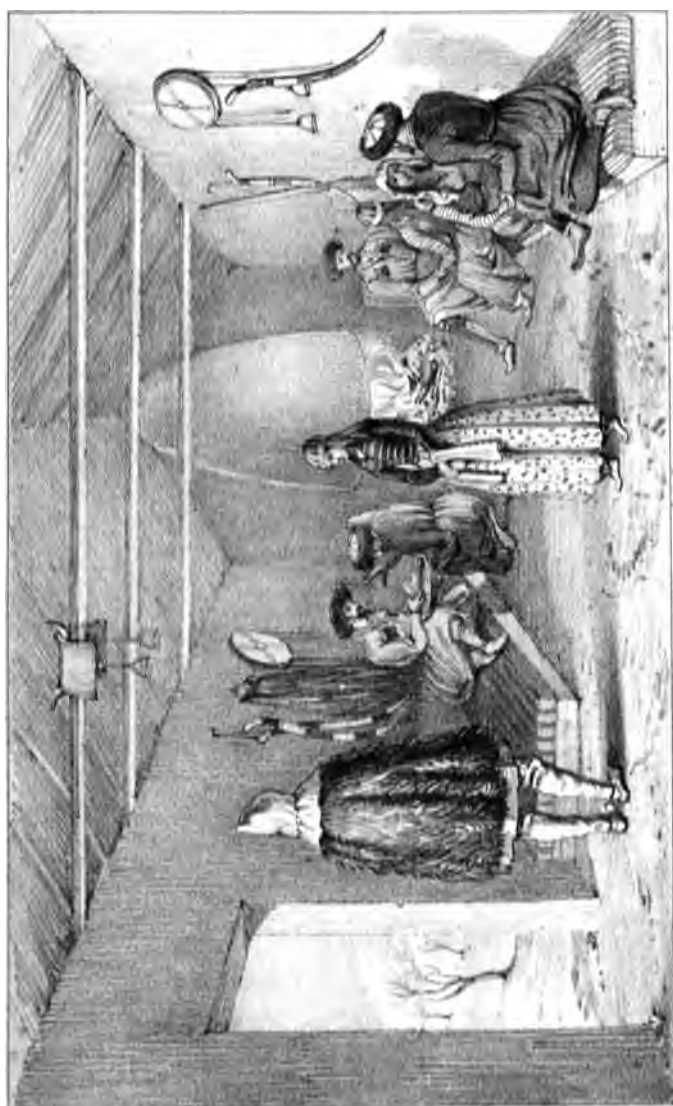
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THE TEACHER'S HOUSE

A YEAR

AMONG

THE CIRCASSIANS.

BY

J. A. LONGWORTH, ESQ.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

LONDON:

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PREFACE.

THE reader will learn, in the course of this narrative, the reasons which induced the writer to take a voyage to Circassia. Warmly sympathizing with the patriotic mountaineers in their struggle against their oppressors, he was himself, during his twelvemonth's residence among them, too actively engaged and too deeply absorbed in it to find leisure for literary composition. It was only on his return to Constantinople that at the recommendation of his friends, he undertook to draw up some account of what he had witnessed, while his recollections were fresh, and the interest

now awakened at home on the subject might render it acceptable.

Without entering at present into the causes that have made the soil of Circassia untrodden, if not forbidden, ground to the traveller, it is sufficient to assert the fact, as an apology for publishing sketches, which, however superficial, have at least the negative merit of novelty to recommend them.

All that has been written on the subject of this country may be summed in a few words. Klaproth's work is one of great antiquarian research, and so far valuable, but his account of a country into which he never penetrated is necessarily meagre and imperfect. Pallas, though a lively writer, labours under a similar disqualification. The Chevalier Taitbout de Marigny visited Circassia in times comparatively peaceful and prosperous, and his amiable character harmonizing with the subject, has invested it with a peculiar charm to those who have found the scenes he so faithfully describes a theatre of the most desolating warfare.

Marigny touched at three places on the coast,

but did not travel into the interior. The first person to do so was Mr. Urquhart; but his visit, though itself an era in the destinies of Circassia, was very brief; nor has he favoured the world with the result of his observations. After him came Mr. Stewart, whose journal, as far as it goes, is faithful and spirited. Mr. Bell has also furnished a narrative of his first expedition; in his second, I was for a whole year almost constantly associated with him, and we were in the course of it subsequently joined by Mr. Knight.

I speak advisedly when I say that no other Europeans, besides those I have enumerated, have ever visited Circassia, always excepting the army of the invaders. The landing of an European there is too extraordinary an event not to be deeply imprinted on the recollection of the whole population, nor has such occurred within the memory of man that forms not still a common topic of conversation there.

The vernacular language of Circassia possesses, as far as I am aware, no affinity with any other known tongue, Asiatic or European; and as,

during my residence there, I found Turkish very generally spoken by the chiefs, elders, &c., I took no pains to make myself master of the former; indeed, even among the people at large, many words and expressions have been adopted from the Turkish, or rather Tartar; and this, in addition to the circumstance of being my own medium of communication with them, will account for the frequent insertion of Turkish phrases in the course of the narrative.

It may, perhaps, be as well to add here that I was the Correspondent of "The Times," and contributed to that Journal the slight notices of Circassia that appeared in its columns during my stay in that country, which, however, will not be found in these volumes.

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A YEAR

AMONG

THE CIRCASSIANS.

CHAPTER I.

Chartering a vessel at Constantinople—Freight and cargo—
Choice of dragoman — Embarkation — Motives for my
voyage to Circassia—Crew of a Turkish vessel.

My resolution had been taken to proceed to Circassia, and my preparations for the voyage had of course been made with a good deal of mystery. I had left the boarding-house, where I usually sojourned at Pera, for the house of a friend, that the visits of the Circassians, with whom I had been put in relation, and who were to be the companions of my voyage, might not attract notice. These precautions were of course necessary. Pera is

filled with Russian emissaries, and whoever is conscious of intentions hostile to her all-pervading influence, walks its streets with the feelings of a conspirator.

During my first interview with the two men under whose conduct I was to go to Circassia, and who were to serve me there in lieu of letters of introduction, I of course scrutinized their appearance with much interest; for which I had the more opportunity, as from my imperfect knowledge of the Turkish language, the negotiation was carried on for me by a friend. They proved to be both Hadjis, (of whom, by-the-bye, there is no scarcity in Circassia, where, in the simplicity of recent proselytism, the pilgrimage confers a title to great respect.) Their names were Hadji Besni and Imam Oli Hadji.

The first was a tall, stately person, with a grave and somewhat heavy countenance, whom the superior neatness of his dress, his long flowing caftan of silk, and the whiteness of his turban, indicated as the chief. He wore at his girdle a Circassian cama or dagger, with a broad, two-edged blade, and an ivory handle. He joined little in the conversation, partly from reserve and partly for the same reason as myself, that he knew little of the Turkish language. His taciturnity, however, was made up for by the vivacity of his companion, an

active little old man, with a white beard, and lively, handsome features, in which the fire and decision of youth yet contended with the craft and composure of a later period.

It was evident, from the assurance with which he assumed the direction of the whole business, leaving his demure associate to count his rosary by his side, that he was in the habit, not only of exerting his authority over his dependents, but of extending it, if possible, to his superiors. It was, perhaps, for this reason, or that, unlike his cleverer brother pilgrim, he could discover no personal advantage in it, that, before the arrangements were completed, Hadji Besni declined accompanying us on our voyage. I was sorry for this desertion, as he was evidently the more desirable attendant of the two; one in whom I could place greater confidence myself, and who would have obtained for me more respect from others.

Imam Oli having engaged to find a vessel by the next day, we met by appointment at the counting-house of a merchant of Galata, where he came attended by the Reïs Achmet, and another rough, weather-beaten Turkish tar, who, to my surprise, assumed the right of sharing in our deliberations. I subsequently ascertained that he came on the part of the crew, who, as is customary in Turkey, had

all an interest in every trading transaction of the ship, and had sent this their rugged representative to watch over it for them.

It was found, after bargaining about the freight for some time, that nothing could be satisfactorily arranged unless we repaired to the vessel, where all the parties concerned might confirm the arrangement. The Turks, therefore, having intimated to us where we might find them, went away as stealthily as they had come, while the merchant and myself threaded the alleys of Galata by another route, to the port, and engaging a caique, proceeded to Topklané, the skellé where it was stationed, and which is that where the Circassians "most do congregate." It was easily distinguishable among the Greek and Turkish vessels which crowd the shores of the Golden Horn, and whose high bows and sterns, resembling the rostrums of Roman galleys, render them so remarkable; whereas the object of the Tchekdermeh (so called from the facility with which it is drawn on shore) being to escape observation as much as possible, it is built to run low in the water, or, as the Turks say, like a thief.

On its deck, as we approached, we discovered a man of rather wild appearance in the Abasian dress, and as we mounted the vessel's side, his

eyes, which glared beneath his shaggy calpac with unusual brilliancy, were fixed on us with an expression of wonder, not unmixed with suspicion. Our Frank costume was naturally associated in his mind with the Russian. We were here soon joined by Imam Oli, the captain, and the rest of the crew, consisting of five or six sailors; and the whole party of us immediately descended into the hold, where we might confer without being seen from the shore. The scene and group amused me very much. Here we were in the dingy hold of a Turkish vessel, crouched with a party of sailors, on a cargo of salt, mysteriously discussing the price to be given for it, and at which we could charter a ship for Circassia,—danger and the dread of that ambitious power, whose blighting influence already overshadows the East, thus investing the every-day affairs of these simple mariners with an air of romance.

We concluded upon taking the salt, amounting to 200 killos, at four piastres the killo, and engaged the ship outwards, at 5000 piastres.

The following three or four days were employed in completing the cargo with an assortment of such goods as we understood were the staple articles of commerce in the country of our destination. They consisted of bez, a coarse white calico, which the Circassians use for shirts; aludja, a striped cotton

cloth, employed for cushions, or for covers for couches and mattresses, and sometimes for enteris, or robes for the women; and the tchivit, a blue gingham, (the word also signifying, in Turkish, indigo,) employed for enteris by both sexes. These are all Turkish manufacture, and produce a good profit in Circassia, being purchased here at twelve and fourteen piastres, and realizing there twenty and twenty-five, the piece. I am thus particular in giving these details, not only to shew the advantages of the trade, but because the three articles I have enumerated, retaining a fixed and standard value, are employed in lieu of a currency all over the Caucasus. So many pieces, or *top*, as they are called, determine the value of all other property—slaves, horses, guns, swords, &c.

But to return to our venture: in addition to the articles I have named, we laid in a considerable quantity of lead and steel, and the ship being loaded with as much merchandize as she could take without compromising the swiftness with which she should sail, Achmet Reïs received orders to proceed with her to Capac, a village in the Bosphorus, towards the entrance of the Black Sea, where there is a customs establishment, for the searching of the ships that pass the Straits, and where I agreed to join them the next day. After some difficulty, I had succeeded in obtaining a

Dragoman. The dangers and privations of the expedition, which, without naming the place we were going to, I thought it right to hint at, had deterred all from embarking in it; and I had made up my mind to dispense with an interpreter till, as had been agreed upon, I had joined Mr. Bell in Abasia, where I should have the benefit of his, when a Greek presented himself for the service.

He was a lad of Cyprus, one of the "noble and swelling spirits of the isle," described by Iago. His testimonials and appearance were alike in his favour. A pair of piercing black eyes, locks of jet flowing to his shoulders from a fez, thrown with a dashing air on one side of his head, an active frame, and swaggering gait, bespoke him a man invaluable to the Eastern traveller, one who would make both him and his firman respected, and permit nobody to rob, cheat, or bully him, but himself. Though, in justice to Demetry, it must be confessed he did all these things in moderation, and he had a host of qualifications besides—valet, tailor, cook, waiter, and dragoman—he could mend or wash, dress a dinner and serve it, and, if necessary, fight; for had he not fought in the war of independence? He was, moreover, master of four languages—at least, he declared himself to be so; but I soon found, to my cost, that his proficiency in them only extended to the details of his various profes-

sions, and I would willingly have dispensed with the rest of his accomplishments for a *quantum sufficit* of French and Turkish.

Accompanied by this attendant, I set out in a caique, on the 30th of April, for Cabac, the place where, as I have said before, my vessel was waiting, towards the mouth of the Bosphorus. The shores of the channel were now beaming in their fulness of splendour and springtide beauty, it being the season when they are seen to most advantage ; they were to me replete with happy souvenirs ; but Circassia, the land of heroism and adventure, was before me, and lessened the regret I felt at leaving them. On nearing our vessel, I could see that several of our seamen had assumed the Circassian bonnet and dress ; on discovering which our caiqdjies called out “ Abassà ! Abassà ! ” exchanging looks of intelligence and surprise. They at once saw whither I was bound ; but without asking any questions on the subject, emphatically wished me a prosperous voyage, and withdrew.

The wind being unfavourable, we determined to wait till the next morning, and in the meanwhile, having nothing better to do, I took a stroll, accompanied by the Hadji and Demetry, my Greek, into the Turkish village. I found its streets dull and deserted, as those of a Turkish

village usually are ; the fact is, that all the houses have their backs turned upon them, yet they must not be supposed on that account to contain less of domestic happiness than those of Europe, whose cheerful exterior is so much more pleasing to the eye of the traveller.

Here the only signs of life are in the neighbourhood of the cafenehs and barbers' shops, where a stranger, if he know the language, may wile away many an hour in the study of oriental life and character. At present, however, it being noon, the heat of the summer sun had overpowered the inmates, and all the benches, and even part of the floors, were covered with sleepers. I was myself tempted to indulge in the same manner, when the Hadji made me a sign to follow him.

We accordingly, notwithstanding the scorching heat of the day, clambered up the side of the adjacent mountain, the summit of which is commanded by the ruins of an old castle, whose heavy and buttressed donjeon and massive walls, sweeping with a wide circuit round the brow of the hill, have for ages ceased to serve any other purpose save that of embellishing the Bosphorus, and of beguiling the thoughts of the traveller as he enters it from the Black Sea, from the weakness of its present masters to the prouder days of Genoese su-

premacy, the days when the haughty republic held the keys of the straits, and took toll in this very castle. In the midst of these ruins the Hadji desired us to sit down, and from the solemnity of his countenance, as well as the time and place he had chosen for the colloquy, I naturally concluded he had some important secret to communicate; to my surprise, however, I found, after a few moments' silent embarrassment, that he expected the revelation to come from me.

He told me in an under tone that, having to introduce me to the chiefs in Circassia, and we being now fairly embarked on our expedition, he hoped that I would no longer conceal from him the object of my mission. In reply, I gave him immediately to understand that I had nothing to conceal, neither had I been sent to Circassia by my own or any other government, but was visiting the country of my own accord, partly from curiosity and partly because I had conceived that at a moment when they were threatened with renewed hostilities by Russia, it might encourage them to learn what progress had been made in the attempt to open a communication with them, and to raise the Russian blockade.

We had been informed that Russia, through her emissaries, had been at great pains to persuade them that England had tamely submitted to the

insult offered to her flag in the capture of the Vixen; whereas, from the declarations of our foreign minister, recently made in the parliamentary debate on this question, it would appear that the honour of our flag, with whose maintenance the independence of their coast had become happily identified, would be duly vindicated. It was important, at the present crisis, that they should understand from the lips of an Englishman that England had not yet abandoned them. It was also my intention to join Mr. Bell, my countryman, who was already in Circassia, and who would be gratified to hear that Russia, in all probability, would be taught respect to his rights, now involved so closely with their own, and made to restore his plundered property.

All this, I was sorry to perceive, was so much Hebrew to the Hadji, to whose grosser apprehension nothing but direct and warlike assistance from England appeared intelligible, and who, I saw, would not part with the belief that I was employed by the English government or the Porte. My protestations to the contrary only served to confirm him in it, and I had here a foretaste of the difficulties that awaited me in Circassia. I found it also impossible, with my imperfect knowledge of Turkish, to convey my ideas on political subjects with any degree of perspicuity, and even still

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more superfluous to trouble my Greek dragoman "with thoughts beyond the reaches of his soul;" all its contemplations, I could see, were absorbed with the care of my luggage, or in preparations for dinner, or in their highest flight busied themselves about my merchandize; to this, when they had once attached themselves, it was no easy matter to disengage them. I therefore, on my arrival in Circassia, left him jointly in charge of it with the Hadji, and sought a mouthpiece for my political inspirations elsewhere.

Lest the reader should appreciate no better than the Hadji my motives for breaking through the Russian blockade, and penetrating into countries hitherto deemed scarcely accessible to Europeans, I shall here take the liberty of adding a few words of explanation. The accounts which, during my residence at Constantinople, I had received of Circassia, though somewhat vague and romantic, had inspired me with an interest, amounting almost to enthusiasm, in its destinies. Like other Asiatic countries, it had felt the progress of Russian ambition, and had simultaneously groaned beneath the shock and pressure; the collision, however, had been of a different nature to that with its neighbours. With all other states the diplomacy of Russia had availed her far more than her arms, or at least she had employed them alternately. But

in the Caucasus, where the inhabitants had lived in a state of jealous seclusion for centuries, and where individual independence, established on so broad a basis, presented no handle, as it did with corrupt governments, for intrigue, diplomacy was baffled and found no field,—war, war to the knife, had been Russia's only resource.

Numbers, discipline, science, and combination had been opposed to the natural advantages of position and personal prowess; and if they could boast of no decided triumphs, they might yet exult in a wide infliction of human misery. After many years of heroic resistance, the Circassians had begun to feel the inequality of the contest, and awoke to a painful sense of their own deficiencies; they saw in what the superiority of their enemy consisted—union, riches, and military skill; they despaired of securing these advantages by their unaided efforts, and with conscious humility, for the first time, cast their eyes abroad for sympathy and assistance. Where, however, were they to find them? The Porte, though secretly inclined to favour their cause, had, to secure her own safety, already sacrificed them to the common oppressor: nor were their advances, when their ambassadors had found their way to Cairo, more successful with Mehamet Ali.

Of the power and resources of the European na-

tions, — of the “*yedi Keral*,” or seven kings of Christendom, as they call them; and foremost among these, of the glory and ascendancy of our monarch,—it is true, notwithstanding the seclusion of their valleys, they had received powerful though indefinite impressions. But how were these to be enlisted in the cause of Circassia? how, even, could her newly-awakened aspirations be made known to them? Without political information of any sort, or, had they possessed it, without political combination to turn it to account, the barriers presented by distance and difference of religion, language and habits, were to them insurmountable.

It was in this state of helplessness and distress that Mr. Urquhart found them when he landed at Soudjak, from the yacht “*Mischief*,” in the summer of 1834. It may easily be imagined what effect the appearance of an Englishman (the first that had visited their country) was, under such circumstances, calculated to produce; it was truly electrifying; and the enthusiasm with which they flocked around him from every quarter, during the three days of his sojourn in the neighbourhood of Anapa, proved that they then already beheld the realization of their wildest hopes. Having obtained a medium of communication, and an intercessor, their simplicity overlooked every other obstacle. But although Mr. Urquhart did his

utmost to repress the extravagant expectations they had founded on his visit, and though, while receiving and undertaking to present the address which the chieftains drew up and signed for our government, he told them that he could hold out no hopes of immediate or warlike assistance, but that much remained to be done, on their part, in the establishment of union and a central authority, before even political relations could be established, or their independence acknowledged; they have, nevertheless, from that day to this, not ceased to look to England as the power whose protecting *Ægis* is eventually to be extended between them and their oppressors.

In the meanwhile, the revolution in their ideas already operated by external pressure, was powerfully accelerated by this event. It formed an era from which Circassia might be included in the problem which involves the destinies of the whole East, and in whose solution all Europe, and particularly England, has so much at stake—viz., whether it be in the designs of Providence that this portion of the globe shall eventually become the inheritance of Russia, or that the mere terror of her arms shall effect its regeneration? None of the countries now under the influence of these causes, in a state of transition, presents objects more attractive than Circassia, not only as regards

the progress of the ameliorations now taking place in her social and political relations, but also the singular system which they will gradually supersede, and which has endured in its primitive simplicity for so many ages. The interest and curiosity excited by these, and the crisis, as I have already said, superinduced by the capture of the "Vixen," were the causes of my visit to Circassia. I owe it at the same time to myself to declare, that without positive encouragement from a gentleman connected in an official capacity with H. M. government, whereby I was led to conclude that I was doing honourable service as a volunteer in the cause of my country, I should never have embarked in this enterprise.

The wind freshening with the first grey of the morning, we left the Bosphorus on the 1st of May, and, coasting along the shore of Asia Minor, arrived at Sinope on the 8th. Though anxious to reach the place of our destination, I did not find the voyage tedious. The absence of cleanliness and comfort I experienced was amply compensated by the insight which a week's close confinement with eight or nine Turks afforded me into their character and manners—an insight more extensive than had resulted from a long residence at Pera. The impression made by them was highly favourable. The harmony with which they lived

together, captain and crew, like so many brothers; the alacrity with which they went through the business of the ship, and which was, no doubt, inspired by the interest every man took in the success of the voyage; and lastly, the unfeigned piety which appeared to influence all their thoughts and actions, formed, certainly, very pleasing objects of contemplation.

The Hadji, however, though very punctual in his religious exercises, proved, I am sorry to say, at bottom to be a great schemer and hypocrite; a most accomplished sycophant withal, whose weekly ministration of blarney was sure to be followed by as regular an inroad upon my purse. My Greek, who soon penetrated into his character, indignantly declared that he was no better than an *Eski Orosbou*, or old courtesan. Be this as it might, I was not sorry to see the rivalry growing between them, since in the tussle for supremacy over me I saw the best chance of escaping from them both.

During this trip, a great source of amusement to me was, observing the progress of a courtship, which was carried on with a great deal of assiduity by the captain's mate. This may appear odd to the reader, as we had no females on board; but it is nevertheless true, and will serve to illustrate Eastern manners. The Hadji, it appears, had a

daughter; and whether he had fallen in love with her from description, or whether in the comely though wrinkled features of the father he read the promise of beauty in his offspring, certain it is that Ibrahim Agha became deeply enamoured, and lavished on the Hadji, as the fair one's representative, a thousand caresses and *petit soins*; and subsequently, I have reason to suspect, as many piastres in the shape of a loan. Indeed, the young lady herself could not have conducted the affair more discreetly; the poor lad being tantalized by the old rogue, as long as it suited his purpose, he in the meanwhile assuming an air of patronage and condescension, recommending him especially to my favour, and procuring him the distinguished honour of dipping his fingers in the same dish with us. The rest of the crew fared very indifferently; a piece of coarse bread and a handful of olives were all their parsimony would allow them to indulge in.

A voyage to the coast of Abasia infers a period of danger and privation, cheered in the meanwhile by the prospect of great profits and future enjoyments. There was one among them, however, a stranger apparently to hope or fear of any sort—viz., the wild-looking Circassian, whom the reader may remember attracted my notice on my first visit to the ship. The extraordinary lustre

of his eyes I afterwards discovered was produced by *Rakee*, for the love of which *Dely*, or mad Mehemet, as they called him, had sold and sacrificed not only all his worldly possessions to his very shirt, but even his flesh and blood, his last offering at the shrine of the jolly god being his wife and children, whom he had disposed of in like manner. He was now working his passage, and returning like the prodigal son to the coast of Abasia, which he declared to be the only country in the world a man so totally unprovided for could live in.

The vice of drunkenness, I have been told, was formerly very prevalent in the Caucasus; but it has been in great measure banished by the spread of Islamism, and the number of stills has of late years considerably diminished.

CHAPTER II.

Sinope—Alarming information—Village of Gerzen—A storm on the Black Sea—Chased by a Russian corvette—Escape—Arrival on the Circassian coast—Our reception.

ON reaching the bay of Sinope, which we were prevented by a baffling wind from entering, the boat was lowered, and, attended by the Hadji and my Greek servant, I made for the shore. Just at that moment a violent squall having arisen, our ship was carried out to sea by it, while our boat made its way with difficulty through the breakers. Two days elapsed before we received any tidings of the former, which had been driven to the S. E. as far as the village of Gerzen.

In the meanwhile, the Hadji led the way to the Circassian coffee-house, and, on arriving there,

ushered me, through several groups of Circassians, to an elevated platform, which was intended for the most distinguished guests, at the upper end of the room. The news having spread through the town that an Inglis Bey had come there on his way to Circassia, the place was soon filled to excess, and I was surrounded by a host of inquisitive visitors. They mostly consisted of Anapalus, or the former residents of Anapa, who since the occupation of that fortress by the Russians had been living in exile at Sinope. Ruin and suffering might be traced in their care-worn and anxious faces; they all wore the dress of the mountain—the sheep-skin calpac and warrior tunic; but all, like their fortunes, in a sad state of dilapidation. Since their expulsion from their native town, they had not ceased to sigh over the recollections of their former prosperity, which, as I have before had occasion to remark, there is a tendency with all emigrants similarly situated to magnify.

The Anapalus, it is true, though the denizens of the narrow and dirty streets of a Turkish fortress, yet, as everything in this world is comparative, being inhabitants of the only town in Circassia, and living under the wing of the pasha, had always assumed airs of superiority over the mountaineers. They were now, for the most part, engaged either

as principals or subordinate agents in the hazardous traffic with the Abasian coast; but the prospect opened to them of re-entering the walls of their paradise by the affair of the "Vixen" had awakened a lively interest, which the appearance of Englishmen for the first time on the scene had greatly tended to increase. Two other ships, I was informed, were in the port prepared to sail, and bound to the same coast as mine, and from all I could collect, this clandestine correspondence was carried on to a very great extent; its profitable nature, and the habits of those employed in it, leading them to set all risks at defiance. The disruption of the commercial ties which have connected the shores of the Black Sea for centuries, is no easy matter.

One exception to this enterprising spirit I afterwards found in the person of a Turkish merchant, who had been upwards of a year, with a large cargo of merchandize, at Sinope, casting many a wistful glance at the beleaguered element, and seeing vessel after vessel depart without venturing to trust himself or his goods on board of them. He was presented to me, as he had previously been to Mr. Bell; he was a round, fat, little man, full of fun, and not wanting in shrewdness, and sat doubled up before me, in the Turkish style,

smoking and talking at a prodigious rate, evidently, for the hundredth time, a good deal excited at the example he had before him, and declaring stoutly, as he had done to a hundred others, that he would accompany me. There was, however, a ludicrous expression of terror in the little man's flushed face and twinkling eyes, that augured badly for the stability of his resolution; and accordingly, when it came to the push, his heart failed him as usual. In allusion to my own expedition, he silyly remarked, that it ~~was~~ all very well for England and the Porte, who were doing nothing for the Circassians, to endeavour to keep up their courage, and to prevent them submitting to the Russians, till they had made up their own minds on the subject. "Yes, yes," he added, laughing and shaking his head; "I understand it all; first comes Daoud Bey, then Kutchuk Bey, then Yakoob Bey, and, lastly, yourself; all to keep the pot boiling over the way; but whether its contents will turn out ditch-water, porridge, or good mutton soup, Allah alone can tell."

The Hadji, who had been about the town to reconnoitre, came in, after a few hours, looking very grave, and asked me if I knew that Nogai Ismael, a messenger from Sefer Bey, was then at Sinope, on his way with despatches to Circassia. He had been informed that this man was spread-

ing reports which were anything but advantageous to Daoud Bey (Mr. Urquhart), Mr. Bell, and myself.

Sefer Bey, the well known Circassian chargé d'affaires, having been expelled the Turkish capital at the instance of the Russian minister, was then residing at Tatar Bazardjek, in the neighbourhood of Adrianople, and from the delay which would have unavoidably occurred had I sought to obtain credentials from him to his countrymen, I had come without them, deeming them at the same time less necessary that it was my intention to join Mr. Bell. That gentleman, as appears from documents already before the public, had been recommended to the Circassians by Mr. Urquhart, who, under his Christian name of David, or Daoud, possessed such an extraordinary influence over them. Here, then, was an attempt to undermine by these calumnies the influence upon which the position of Mr. Bell, and of all connected with him, was originally founded, and would be hereafter so materially affected.

If I was to be so heralded to a country where the suspicions of a people unaccustomed to receive foreigners among them, and circumvented on every side by the schemes as well as the arms of Russia, were so easily excited,—where, in this state of ignorance, the minds of men were the sport of

the most opposite passions; hurried from the extreme of kindness to that of hostility, the prospect in going there was by no means agreeable. Though the Hadji had been unable to inform himself of the exact nature of these reports, I was too well acquainted with the source of them. The Dragoman whom Mr. Urquhart had employed in his communications with the Circassians had lately been dismissed from his service for misconduct, and in revenge had been the author of these calumnies. I knew, moreover, that the month previous to my departure from Constantinople this person had left it on a visit to Sefer Bey at Tatar Bazardjek.

Under all these circumstances, I thought it best to send for Nogai Ismael himself, and to come at once to an explanation with him. My interview with him, however, turned out far from satisfactory; for although he positively denied having said anything against me, the dry and repulsive manner in which he did so, and his refusal to accept a free passage in my ship, convinced me that he harboured no friendly intentions. The most prudent course, perhaps, under such impressions, would have been to defer my voyage; but it might have injured the cause by confirming these suspicions; and the position of Mr. Bell, who was already in Circassia, and no less obnoxious to them than myself, might

have been materially compromised by it. My determination, then, was taken to join that gentleman, and take my share of the danger that might result from these accusations while boldly facing our accusers.

After waiting three days for news of our vessel, we at length learnt that she had put into Gerzen, whence the wind would not permit her to return. We accordingly engaged a large boat, and, leaving the ancient capital of Mithridates, set out to join her. My Hadji, while at Sinope, had increased my establishment by four domestics, all Circassians, whom he had selected out of a crowd of volunteers; to these I had added one of my own choice, Reshid, a young giant, whose open and cheerful physiognomy, and stalwart figure, had from the first attracted my notice. The facility with which the individuals of this numerous suite entered upon their respective duties, every one of them as familiar to them and knowing his place as if he had performed them for years, was really admirable. Asiatics, I have remarked, have a tact or aptitude for these things, and are never so happy as when, by an association of this sort, under some chief or head, they contrive effectually to consult their own interest and consequence as individuals. The consideration enjoyed by the rich and powerful extends to every member of their household; nor

in accepting service do they at all compromise their independence, or subject themselves to degradation of caste, as is the case with the menials of Europe; they are as proud to serve as their masters can be to rule; and whatever appearance of servility may in the eyes of Europeans mark their intercourse with their superiors, the real freedom of speech is such as in people of similiar stations among ourselves would be deemed intolerable.

My arrival, under such circumstances of pomp, produced no small sensation in the village of Gerzen. I was waited upon at my quarters by the local authorities—viz., the Turkish Agha and the Greek Tchorbadji, the former being the Turkish and the latter the Greek municipal officer of the place; and the honours and attentions that were paid me on all hands were such as at another time would, perhaps, for the novelty of the thing, have tempted me to play the Pasha a little longer. It is true the Cafenek in which I was lodged, though the principal hotel at Gerzen, must, in point of comfort and accommodation, have suffered in comparison with an English barn, yet, squatted there on my mattress, &c., I received my visitors with all the pomp and circumstance of Turkish ceremonial; and when I went abroad, my Kiaya marshalled my men and adjusted my “tail” after the most approved etiquette of Circassia.

I fear, however, I have detained my reader too long at Gerzen, for which I have no apology to make, except that I was detained there myself, much against my will, by contrary winds, for five days; on the sixth, a light breeze sprung up from the southward, and we set sail for Circassia. The wind continued fair till the evening, and we had made considerable way, when suddenly it shifted to the north, and as the night advanced, swelled into a gale, bringing with it thunder, lightning, and rain, covering the sky with clouds, and the sea with foam. It was one of the sudden storms which render the Black Sea so dangerous, and from which it has derived its modern appellation.

After some rather disconcerted looks at the prospect of a sleepless night, our sailors met the approaching tempest with resolution; every sail was struck and taken in except the maintop, straining as if it were going to shivers, and hurrying our ship rather through than over the waters, which kept breaking over us at every instant.

Thus we were driven on until the morning, sometimes before the north wind, and sometimes before the west, the deep bass of the former alternating with the shriller roar of the latter. The next day, though the weather had somewhat abated of its fury, it continued boisterous, and with the evening became as violent as before. On the

morning of the 20th of May the storm had ceased, and the mists clearing away from the sea discovered the mountains of Asia Minor to our left. Our Reis, to take in water, and discover where we had been driven to, put in for shore ; on approaching it we found ourselves in the Gulf of Keseroum, where it presents a bold, rugged outline, the front range of hills being commanded by loftier mountains, whose cloud-wrapped summits recede darkly in the distance. At the foot of these is the town of Triboli ; its white-walled and red-roofed houses, gaily painted serai of the Musellim, and graceful minarets, mingled with cypress and mulberry trees, rising the one above the other, overlook the sea in terraces.

Our crew, wearied and overwatched, would fain have landed here to repose themselves, but the town being in the pashalik of Trebizond, where the vigilance of a Russian consul was exerted to enforce the regulations of non-intercourse with the Abasian coast, our Reis would not venture to approach it, but, keeping at a respectful distance, sent the boat ashore for water. On its return, it brought us the intelligence of two other ships also in the offing waiting for a wind for Circassia. Accordingly, with a very favourable breeze from the southward, at one o'clock P. M., we all three started together. About the same time next day, having

scarcely lost sight of the Asiatic coast, we discovered, gleaming faintly above the horizon to our left, the snow-clad summits of Elborouz. The crew, as frequently happens on such occasions, differed as to their being clouds or mountains. I was myself convinced of their being the latter, and the next morning confirmed my opinion. Though beneath their veil of snow, and robed in the azure hue of distance, they had still a dim and spectral appearance; there remained no doubt that the Schah Elborouz, the mighty Caucasus, for "they crowned him monarch long ago," the Jälbouz, or "icy crests" of the Asiatics, the Juldúz Daghlár, or "starry mountains" of the Tartar, were now before us. Towering majestically many leagues in the interior of the land, they had welcomed our approach to it long ere those of the coast, "things of lesser dignity," had emerged from the waters.

In contemplating this stupendous chain, it was easy to conceive how the Easterns should, in primeval ages, have beheld in it part of the wall that encircled the universe, and that the Greeks, in regions so remote and ethereal, that charmed the eye, though inaccessible to the footsteps of man, should have found a local habitation for the airy nothings of their vivid imaginations. Prometheus, bound and bleeding on his rock—the bus-

kined Amazons—Jason and Medea—are creations of which time cannot divest them, being at least as imperishable as the mountains themselves.

I was engaged with these classical reveries, during which I had taken out my books to refresh my memory with respect to the story of the Argonauts, when they were all at once disturbed by an incident of rather a disagreeable nature, and which forcibly recalled my attention from the visions of the past to the stern realities of the times we live in—to the present terrors of a power, to whose “vaulting ambition” the rampart of the universe had long since proved an inadequate barrier, and whose cruisers were now prepared to dispute our passage to the land of mythology and romance.

It was about two o'clock P.M., the lower range of mountains had already begun to circle the horizon over our bows, when the boy at the masthead suddenly gave an alarm. I ought previously to have mentioned, that we had been accompanied in our voyage since the morning by a small, fast-sailing boat called a Tchember Caique, which, running considerably ahead of us on our right, seemed to be piloting us gaily to the blockaded coast. The boy now gave notice that she had altered her course, and was returning; he immediately added, she was pursued by a ship of war. Our telescopes soon painfully confirmed this intel-

ligence, and there was a moment of bitter disappointment and uncertainty. The Reis, as I turned to consult with him, presented a perfect picture of dismay; his hand convulsively grasped the tiller, drops of perspiration stood on his forehead, and his hard, weather-beaten features were strongly agitated. He had ordered every sail to be struck, and seemed disposed to abandon the ship to its fate.

It was now time, I saw, to take its direction in my own hands, and, backed by my Circassians, who forthwith put me in command of it, I shouted "*Duz doghru!*" (Right onwards.) The sails were again unfurled, and we resumed our voyage to the coast. As we had anticipated, the corvette, for such she proved to be, no sooner perceived us, than, relinquishing the smaller for the greater prize, she gave us chase. Things now wore an aspect of deeper interest; the Tchember Caique, with this diversion in its favour, was seen scudding swiftly in the distance from the scene of action; while the corvette, bearing down with crowded canvass from the N.W., had already opened its fire upon us. Our course being almost in an opposite direction to the N.W., we at first necessarily neared each other. Our men lay vigorously to their oars, and a couple of Hadjis (for we had taken another in at Sinope) were no less hard at prayers in the

jolly boat. By their united efforts, and the blessing of Providence, we evidently, as he dropped astern of us, gained on our pursuer; his guns sounded fainter and fainter at every discharge, and his size and rigging, which at first seemed formidably distinct, grew gradually less and less, till, after four hours chase, having diminished to a speck on the horizon, it finally disappeared.

It was pleasant, at this period of the affair, to observe the demeanour of my Hadji. Descending from his perch in the jolly boat, he drew nearer to us aft, and, after a deliberate survey of the receding corvette, began suddenly cutting capers like a madman, and crowing like chanticleer. "*Hai! Gidde Giaour!*" he exclaimed; "what are you afraid of now? Why don't you make haste, *Kaffer?* don't you see we are ready for you? Only come alongside, and we will give you a reception that will teach you how to terrify true believers in future."

Our Reis, however, whose spirits were by no means so excitable, exhorted the men not to relax their efforts, as it wanted only two hours of sunset, and the danger was by no means past. As he spoke, a sudden squall, sweeping the sea from the south, came in confirmation of his words. We accordingly took in sail, and Achmet Reis again called out, "My lads, with an enemy behind and

a lee shore in front of us, this is no time to sleep, nor to amuse ourselves; we shall have a restless night of it." And so it proved. It required no small degree of skill and labour to keep clear of the coast on the one hand, while, in the darkness, the fears of the crew continually presented to their imagination the hostile corvette on the other. Overcome with fatigue, I had, just before day-break, fallen into a sound sleep, from which I was at length roused by the Hadji to find every danger, both from foe and tempest, was past. The weather had become serene, and we were sailing westward, scarcely a stone's throw from the Circassian coast. Its features were now distinctly visible, and I gazed on them with the deepest interest. It was composed of a low chain of hills, descending abruptly to the water's edge, the brow chiefly occupied by woodlands, now and then opening into pasturage, where goats and sheep were browsing in great quantities, and here and there patches of the brightest verdure, consisting of corn enclosures.

After a short time we could see the Circassians assembled on the heights, and some of them following our ship along the shore; we thereupon fired off a salute with our guns and pistols, which they answered with their rifles. At about ten o'clock, A.M., 23rd May, we arrived in the bay, or rather roadstead, for there is no shelter for vessels

off Pælaat. I had no difficulty in identifying it with the drawing of Marigny, the conical hill to the N.W. forming a conspicuous landmark. Having dropped our anchor, we prepared to go on shore, which, to my surprise, appeared entirely deserted; not a human being was in sight, but in the shadow of the wood which clothed the slope on the right, almost down to the sea, I thought I could distinguish a number of persons moving to and fro, and presently there rose from it a single horseman on a white charger. Advancing slowly to the beach, he urged his horse up to the knees in the water, then having waived his hand courteously in sign of welcome, retired as leisurely as he had come. This ceremony concluded, the beach was soon crowded with the natives, who issued in great numbers from the wood.

On landing, we were conducted to a small hut built of hurdles, closely interwoven, and thatched with straw. It was intended for the temporary shelter of the mariners who came there. There was a mat in one corner of this hovel, on which I was installed with great state, while the bottom of the apartment was occupied by Circassians, who successively entered and quitted it in large parties, all repeating the salutation of "Ouza Pasha," raising their hand to their right ear, as we should

to our hats, and then standing before me for some minutes in respectful silence and an air of much gravity and submission. But this submissiveness of manner I soon discovered was united to the most thorough independence of character, and founded, as with all ceremonious nations, on self-respect, which scrupulously pays to others the deference it exacts for itself. The dress of these people was the well-known Caucasian costume, the sheep-skin bonnet, and collarless frock, with loose, hanging sleeves, fitted close to the body, fastened by loops in front, and provided on either breast with a row of ten cartridges.

The trowsers were wide above, and gathered tightly over the knee and calf, and covered to the middle of the leg with parti-coloured and gaily-gartered galoshes, or overalls; the shoes, remarkably neat, are without soles, and of red morocco trimmed with silver, of black leather, or of ox hide. Their arms are, a rifle, slung in a felt cover over the shoulders; a single pistol, which in general is mounted with silver, and stuck in the belt behind; a cama, or broad double-edged dagger, in front; and a sabre, of which the hilt, without guard of any sort, is of ebony or plated silver, and the sheath of wood, covered with black and red morocco leather, and garnished with silver lace. The whole equipment has a decidedly mar-

tial effect, and sets off the erect and manly figure of the wearer to great advantage. But the circumstance which particularly deserves attention is, the very uniform character of their costume, not only in the *tout ensemble*, but in its most trifling details and adjustment, which, while giving them the appearance of one family, are the outward signs of the congeniality of sentiments and customs which makes them so in reality. The calpac, or bonnet, is perhaps an exception to this uniformity, though even in that

“ ——— Facies non omnibus una
Nec diversa tamen ; ”

and according to the material of which it may be composed, of lamb, sheep, or goat skin, crisp and curly, long and shaggy, thick and bushy, imparts a peculiar expression to the features—be it of softness, ferocity, or composure,—and, as I have frequently observed, may be taken as an index of the prevailing taste, if not of the disposition of the wearer. The cloth is of native manufacture, of sober colours, chiefly grey, straw tint, or brown, and of the coarsest texture ; and the general effect of the dress, even when trimmed with silver lace, is by no means rich ; and there was, on the contrary, a decided air of poverty about those who first greeted us, many of whom, though wearing their rags with great dignity, were regular tatter-

demallions—so at least thought my Greek ; for after eyeing the room and its inmates with a look of chagrin, and casting sundry indignant glances at the Hadji, who had been entertaining him during the whole voyage with accounts of the magnificence he was to expect, turned to me with an inimitable grimace, and asked me, “ how I liked the country to which we had come.” I am now ashamed to acknowledge how much I participated in his impressions, and how much the illusion with which I had come there was made up of associations of the splendour and elegance so indispensable to the imagination of an European.

The Circassians are, on the whole, a very fine race of men ; their stature is middle-sized ; their limbs clean-made, and well-knit ; their features hard from exposure, but regular.

The Hadji, who had been absent an hour to make arrangements for a konag, at length returned to inform me they were completed, and presently three led horses, very fair roadsters, having made their appearance, we left the hut.

On preparing to mount my horse, I was struck with the peculiar form of the saddle, it being altogether different from anything I had seen before. It consisted of a light frame of wood, covered with red morocco leather, surmounted by a small flat and oblong cushion. This was about two inches

thick, stuffed with wool, and covered with red and black leather, and trimmed with silver lace. Rising from the centre of the saddle-bow is an upright piece of wood, four inches high, polished, with a black edge, and another of the same description slanting from the back of the saddle. On seating myself between these for the first time, not to mention the danger of being impaled by the one or the other, I ran considerable risk, from the shortness of the stirrup, which raised my knees as high as the saddle, of being in my first exhibition of horsemanship summarily ejected from it. Unlike that of the Turks, it nowhere affords a resting place to the leg, the only points of contact being the heels and the hams. After some time I got accustomed to it, and learnt to value its advantages as a war saddle. The Circassian turns on it with the greatest facility, shooting behind him, like the Parthian of old, with his horse at full gallop; and, hanging by the piece of wood in front, manages to throw himself almost beneath his courser's belly, picking up anything, in full career, from the ground. Its appearance on the horse's back, in comparison with the lumbering Turkish or even European saddle, is that of a toy; nor does it weigh half of the one, or a third of the other: to this circumstance, as well as the lightness of the bridle, made of narrow strips of well-cured ox

hide, the Hadji, on our way to our konag, drew my attention. He told me that, in the fatiguing excursions and forays they made, a few pounds more or less made an object of importance.

Accompanied by a large party of people on foot, who officiously led the way for us, we proceeded by a sheltered pathway through a thicket or shrubbery, a sort of natural garden, containing an abundance of wild fruit in blossom, and many aromatic shrubs. About the centre of this we passed on the left a homestead, composed of several tenements, or apartments; for here they are the same thing. There was a forge at work in one of them, and at the gateway of the farm-yard stood a man, who was pointed out to me as a Russian prisoner. He served me for a specimen of a race which from that time I always found it easy to discriminate. The high cheek bones, piggish eyes, and turned-up nose, the shuffling gait, a compromise between the peasant's slouch and a military strut, would, even in the absence of the hatchet in their hand or belt, at once distinguish them from the Circassians. On issuing from this grove, we came to the banks of the Pchat, now shrunk by the summer's drought to a rivulet. Our horses waded over at a narrow but rather deep ford, the horsemen taking those who walked on their cruppers.

Traversing to the westward some rising ground,

covered with corn and millet enclosures, we came to another clump of trees at the entrance of a cleft in the mountains, and making our way through these, we found ourselves in the yard of our konag. Except in the direction we had come, where it was screened by thick foliage, it was hemmed in on every side by steep hills, clothed to the top with verdure, peeping as it were one above the other on the sheltered cottages at their feet; the highest of them was the conical hill I have already alluded to.

CHAPTER III.

The guest-house—A Circassian dinner—Impression created by my arrival—Odd notions—Condition of the sex—Circassian beauty—Presents.

Our Konag Bey stood ready to receive me, and leading my horse opposite to the guest-house, assisted me to alight. He then ushered me into the house, and with his own hands relieved me of my arms, and hung them against the wall. A silken couch had been spread for me in a corner of the room, on one side of the hearth; at the head of this was a pile of cushions: with the exception of these, and a mat and cushion laid down for the Hadji, there was no other furniture in the room; but the walls, gleaming with the weapons of the guests, presented anything but a naked appear-

ance. For some time, everybody remained standing but myself; after a short silence, the words of welcome were exchanged, when another pause took place. Our host then desired the principal guests to sit down, but at first on no account would he be seated himself; after repeated pressing, however, he crouched himself down at a respectful distance on the floor. I have been thus minute in detailing these ceremonies, as they mark the reception of a stranger in every house in Circassia. The room itself was of an oblong shape, eight yards by four; the walls were constructed of stakes and hurdles, plaistered on each side with a coat of light-coloured earth; the floor was of hard earth, which I observed was every now and then carefully watered and swept. The thatch above, supported by rafters in a triangular form, descended from the roof over the walls in large projecting eaves, serving in summer for verandahs. Extending from the walls almost to the middle of the room in a semi-circle of about two yards in diameter, and at three or four feet from the ground, was a huge chimney; it contracted itself towards the top in the shape of a bell, and perforating it at the gable, rose a few feet above the roof.

So spacious are these chimneys, that there is hardly one of them without a swallow's nest, where,

unmolested by the fire beneath, they enliven the apartment by their constant twittering. They are made of the same materials as the walls; indeed, all manner of building, including bee-hives and water-closets, is of basket-work. It is speedily set fire to, and with the assistance of friends, who never refuse a helping hand on these occasions, almost as speedily rebuilt. With such neighbours as the Russians, it is perhaps well that architecture has made no great progress. Under such circumstances, a man feels less reluctance in deserting and firing with his own hand, if necessary, his habitation, the preservation of which, in more civilized countries, so commonly involves the sacrifice of liberty.

After we had been some time seated, a large bowl of a beverage the Tartars call *boza* (in Circassian, *sount*) was presented to me by my host: it is a mixture of fermented millet seed and honey, "thick and slub," and exceedingly nauseous, I thought, though drinking it out of complaisance to my entertainer, who watched me closely, to see that I did not flinch, and during the evening renewed the charge, bowl in hand, at least a dozen times. Dinner, or, more properly speaking, supper, which constitutes their chief meal, was served after sunset. It consisted of a series of dishes, re-

moved one after the other, on round, three-legged tables, about the size of a joint-stool. A sheep having been slaughtered for us, the mutton was served on a thick layer of millet-cake, instead of a dish; being moist and soft, it is easily moulded into the requisite form—that is, with a deep trench in the centre, containing the sauce, or condiment, defended by a circular mound, itself invested on the outside by substantial pieces of mutton or beef.

The Hadji and myself commenced the attack on these fortifications, having been provided for the purpose with small knives by the Circassians, who, by-the-bye, always wear these, in addition to their daggers, in their girdles. The latter are never used at meals, the former being for the double purpose of carving their victuals *and* shaving their polls. After meat came the broth, served up in a wooden bowl, or rather a reservoir, of formidable dimensions; its surface frozen over like the Arctic Ocean, not with ice, however, but grease; but by inserting, in imitation of my Hadji, the spoon (and, *par parenthese*, I must protest in the name of my friends against the statement put forth, that they ever insert their hands,) with a dexterous jerk into the liquid below, I found I could convey it to my mouth in a tolerable state of purity. The ensuing courses were, for the most part, composed of

pastry, *caïmac*, or cream, cheese-cakes, forced meat in vine-leaves, and finally a large bowl of yoghort, or curdled milk, which last, like the pilaff in Turkey, invariably crowns the repast. I was at first surprised to see no vegetables on the table, but I afterwards learned that, although abounding in the country in every variety, the Circassians seldom or never eat them.

A native of this country dining with Scodra Pasha, in Albania, and declining to eat the vegetable which the Turks, odd to say, are as fond of as the Circassians are averse to them, and which, in successive dishes, formed, on this occasion, the staple of the dinner, was pressed repeatedly by the latter to partake of them. He at length told the Pasha, with much *naïveté*, that none but beasts dine on greens in Circassia.

During the course of our meal, observing that the Hadji handed to the bye-standers and assistants lumps of meat and pieces of pastry, in compliance with the custom, I shewed myself, at the expense of my host, equally generous. On receiving these scraps, the favoured individual retired with great modesty into a corner, and, turning his back to the company, devoured them in secret. As every table was removed, it was taken to our servants, and after they had been satisfied, passed to a crowd of hungry expectants out of doors. About

three hours after sunset, additional beds and cover-lids were brought in for me and my domestics, which, on being spread, covered every part of the floor. I ought to mention that my counterpane was of brocaded silk, and that the whole was the manufacture of Turkey.

Notwithstanding all these appliances, lulled besides by a chorus of nightingales, I could not sleep. The melodious concert was completely marred by frogs and jackals, whose croaking and screaming rose incessantly from forest and fen on every side of us, and became now and then so fearfully clamorous, that it seemed as if our dwelling were threatened with a general assault from them. These noises, not to mention the boza I had swallowed to gratify my host, had the effect of a bad conscience in keeping me awake till morning; and yet, though disagreeable in themselves, they in some measure pleased from their novelty. Indeed, everything I had witnessed during the few hours I had been in the country produced a similar effect. A voyage of a few days had opened a new existence to me. The originality in this people's manners had been preserved by the exclusive character of their institutions, which had been for centuries decidedly unfavourable to the admission of strangers to their mountains, and which had made them, in consequence, a repertory, not only of old

armour, houses, and costume, but of fashions and customs no less obsolete.

It was only since Russia had officiously contributed to this systematic exclusion, by blockading their coast, that, out of a very natural spirit of contradiction, strangers had been invited to explore Circassia, and admitted to contemplate a picture of manners, in the existence of which the progress of civilization, reducing everything to a material standard of interest, must have long since impaired their belief. What, for example, can appear more romantic and improbable than the fact that to every residence in the Caucasus, from the highest to the lowest, is attached a guest-house, where strangers (that is, Circassians or Turks) are received and entertained in the most liberal manner for nothing, and that the host, whatever may be his condition, and whatever the respect he may otherwise claim, must, in his own house, attend upon them in person, and wait their permission to be seated himself?

All this ceremonious, and what we should style elaborate, civility; their boundless hospitality; the devotion of servants to their masters; the punctilios of rank, the more tenaciously observed, perhaps, that all other and more substantial distinctions, are wanting; the scrupulous deference universally paid to age, are virtues—old-fashioned

virtues if you like—too homely for wealth and luxury, too formal for the bustling activity of commerce to be encumbered with, but which have still a home in the Caucasus, in whose shadowy retreats, and round the dwelling of the warrior and mountaineer, they continue to linger and to shed a charm, we should look in vain for elsewhere.

We were visited early next day by all the people of note in the neighbourhood. Rumours were in circulation that the Russians were preparing to invade their country, and had already indicated Pchat as the probable point of attack. But whatever anxiety might prevail on the subject, their behaviour exhibited their habitual urbanity and decorum, which, it seems, no danger, however imminent, could ruffle.

My arrival at this juncture was, of course, regarded with great interest. Many were the reports afloat as to who and what I was, and as I met the curious, though respectful, gaze of my visitors, or passed through the crowds who, with their horses tied to the neighbouring trees, and separated into knots, were engrossed in discussions out of doors, I little suspected, at the time, what the nature of these discussions might be—that they were settling among themselves in what degree of relationship I stood to the King of England, and deciding when or in what manner the merchandize I had

brought was distributed ; the only difficulty they experienced being to whom they should return thanks for the presents ; whether to Sultan Mahmoud II., or King William IV. When I told them that I had come as a visitor to their interesting country, and in order to inform them of the progress of the Vixen affair, and that the merchandize had been brought to their country by way of a commercial experiment, my assertions, though listened to with deference, and by no means contradicted, (for every one here has the undisputed right to tell as many falsehoods as he pleases,) were nevertheless entirely disbelieved.

Their incredulity in these matters may, in some measure, be attributed to the encouragement given to their extravagant notions with respect to me and my mission by the Hadji, whom, when informed by my Greek of his gasconading, I took severely to task ; with very little effect, however, since, though I might succeed in stopping his mouth, I could not prevent what proved equally calculated to mislead, his significant shrugs, and the mysterious motions of his head. He was determined to enhance his own importance with his countrymen, by magnifying mine. Unfortunately, he had to deal with people too willing to be imposed upon, and who, from their social and political position, were already, without any assistance from him, the

dupes of their own sanguine wishes and excited imaginations. Unaccustomed to the slightest intercourse with Europeans, yet within the last few years building the most extravagant expectations on that which had been opened with them by a few individuals, and at the same time grossly deceived by their own chieftains, subordinate agents, and dragomans, it is not to be wondered at that they should attach an undue importance to the landing of an Englishman on the coast. That any man should be induced by motives of sympathy and curiosity to break the Russian blockade, and expose himself to the dangers and fatigues of a journey in the Caucasus, was a statement in which their own habits and ideas forbade them to place any credit whatever.

Among those who in the course of the morning came to pay their respects to me was Islam Gheri Indar Oglou. This was the first ouzden, or noble, I had seen, and I was at once impressed by his air of calm and conscious superiority. Instead of a rifle, he carried the bow and quiver, weapons even among themselves now serving more for ornament than use, and, in the eyes of an European, investing the wearer with the associations of by-gone centuries, from which, with these arms about him, the warrior stands forth with the startling effect of an apparition. Of these, together with a Damascus

sword, which, I should observe, is invariably worn with them, he was, on entering the room, relieved by his attendant or henchman, who, after disposing of them against the wall, took his place by his master's side in silence. Islam Gheri is a man of middle age, and though, as justly observed by the Chevalier de Marigny, unpossessed of the energy of his elder brother, the fiery and astutious Nogai, yet much esteemed for his unassuming wisdom and sagacity. His mild and melancholy features at once prepossessed me in his favour; and from the very amiable light in which his family had been represented by the Chevalier de Marigny in his narrative, I felt happy to form his acquaintance. Upon his part, however, he appeared to meet my advances with a degree of distance and constraint, for which I could not at first account; but I very shortly discovered that he and his family felt offended, and in some degree alarmed, that I should not while at Pchat have availed myself of their *konag*, a mark of consideration to which their station in this neighbourhood entitled them.

But the Hadji, under whose guidance, as a stranger in the country, I had necessarily placed myself,—however loth to submit to such a Mentor,—had, in furtherance of the unprincipled schemes he had already formed on my property, taken it to the house of a man who, though well to do in the

world, had not more character to lose than himself. The excuse he made for not having conducted me to the house of Indar Oglou, whom he accused of being a secret partisan of the Russians, was not considered valid even by the Tocavs or freemen of Pchat, who were most hostile to that family. A bey, they said, on first coming to the country, should have been lodged with a bey, and not have selected his konag like a Turkish merchant. It was natural, then, that the family in question should feel mortified at what appeared to be an intentional slight on the part of an Englishman, and to countenance the worst insinuations of their enemies, at a moment, too, when the threatened invasion of their valley had revived them in all their former malignity.

Since the year 1818, when the unsuccessful attempt was made by Russia, through the Chevalier de Marigny, and other emissaries, no doubt with ulterior political objects, to establish commercial relations here, the Indar Oglous, who had unwittingly lent themselves to these projects, became in some degree the victims of them. The philanthropic views and plausible address of Russia's instrument only made him the more dangerous; yet, although backed, as I have been told, with valuable presents from the emperor, they may have prevailed with the Indar Oglous, they failed altogether in deluding their more vigilant countrymen.

If, as a late traveller has conjectured, the Circasians be descended from the Trojans, (although as far as character goes we may find much better prototypes for them in the Greeks,) they have certainly shewn themselves very unlike them in one respect; for though ready enough to receive the presents, they have ever shewn a wholesome mistrust of the “*dona ferentes*,” neither are they likely to betray their defences, the mighty ramparts confided to them by nature, by the admission of wooden horses in the shape of commercial advantages. On this occasion, by way of settling the affair with the Russians at once, after an equitable distribution of their salt, they made splendid bonfires of their magazines. The interference for their protection of the Indar Oglous only involved their own disgrace; yet if they could not save their property, did they at every risk provide for the personal safety of their protégées. They had become their *musafirs*, and not only they but all their tribe, the powerful one of the Chipakows, were bound to afford them shelter,—such is the law of the mountains, one graven on every heart, and outweighing all other considerations, even those of patriotism itself. When I afterwards asked Keri Oglou Shamiz Bey, a member of this tribe who had favoured the escape of one of the fugitives, why he had harboured a Russian, he answered, “At the time I

did so, I thought his intentions honest; but had he been ten times the traitor he was, being the musafir of our tribe, I was bound to protect him."

These occurrences naturally weakened, if they did not entirely subvert, the influence of Mehemet Indar Oglou, and intervening at a time when the authority of the nobles was everywhere on the wane, encouraged the triumphant Tocavs, or middle class, to dispute with him every remaining privilege. It was only a few years back that he had arrogated the right of levying imposts on all vessels and their cargoes entering the port of Pchat. But the Tocavs had decided in council, and supported their decision with their rifles, that this was an usurpation, and that no man, of whatever degree he might be, had the right to take toll in Circassia. Thus shorn of his former prerogatives, suspected by his countrymen at large (not excepting even his own tribe) of intriguing with the Russians, and almost at open feud with his neighbours at Pchat, had Mehemet, as the oldest, wealthiest, and most powerful of Circassian ouzdens, firmly maintained his ground against his enemies to the present time.

A hundred vassals cultivated his fields, and rallied, if necessary, round his person, while four goodly sons, in the prime of manhood, all distinguished for their bravery and intelligence, united

to uphold the sinking fortunes of their house. Nogai, the eldest, was acknowledged to be one of their boldest warriors, and his only answer to the aspersions that assailed his family on the score of friendship to the Russians had been given on the field of battle, where he certainly shewed them no favour. But though an accomplished cavalier, it was chiefly as a marksman, the surest in Natukvitch, that he distinguished himself: in the last campaign at Soudjouk, he had picked off from the midst of his battalions, and brought from his saddle, a Russian general. I was informed by Islam Gheri, who apologized for his absence, that he was then on an expedition. Their father, he added, would have waited upon me but was confined to his bed by indisposition.

On my part, I took the earliest occasion to explain to him that it was entirely through inadvertence that I had not made his house my konag; and that nobody could be more convinced than I was, even from the shewing of Marigny himself, that the accusations against them were groundless. After this explanation, we became every day better friends, and he ended by promising, during my stay in the country, to accompany me everywhere, and attend me as an Ataluk, or instructor in its usages.

Preparatory to my journey to the interior, the females of the family had been getting up for me

several articles of Circassian attire, such as shoes, *shalvar*, &c., which had been thought indispensable. It was expected I should make them some presents in return; and as it was hinted to me that I might deliver them in person, I of course seized the opportunity of judging for myself whether fame, in its praises of Circassian beauty, had exaggerated or done justice to it. The terms of the invitation itself, it being proposed to go and look at, and not pay a visit to the ladies, formed a curious comment on their social position; and in passing from the guest-house to the tenement occupied by his "womankind," the manner in which they were spoken of by our host led me almost to believe that we were going to his stables instead of his harem.

When you hear of their being so many hands high, and worth so many purses, you naturally conclude they are cattle that are spoken of. A Circassian has original notions on the subject; both men and women have their value as property all over the Caucasus; and it may be some consolation to the latter to know, that with any pretensions to beauty, they have ten times the value of the former.

On being ushered into the apartment, the wife and daughter of our host, who were seated on a small divan in the corner of it, stood up to re-

ceive us; nor could they be induced to resume their seats until I had done violence to my European ideas of *convenance* by previously sitting down myself. Yet I soon discovered that the compliment of rising as we entered was not intended for me alone, but that they had to repeat the same ceremony on the entrance of every creature with a beard, whatever his age or condition: it is a mark of respect which all women in Circassia owe, in his quality of creation's lord, to the meanest drudge in their household; nor can they on any account be seated in his presence till his pleasure to that effect be made known to them.

The daughter, Hafiza, was a lively, pretty girl of sixteen or seventeen, looking rather demure, as is necessary on a first interview, but by no means ill-natured; indeed, she had no cause to be so, aware, as she must have been, that no girl in the neighbourhood could bide a closer scrutiny, or command a better price, than herself,—in short, though far from realizing the *beau ideal* we should form of sublime and beautiful, yet, as things go in that country, every way entitled to rank as a Circassian beauty. She had regular and pretty features, blue eyes, and fair complexion; her hair was of a light auburn colour, and hung in a profusion of braided tresses over her shoulders, from a bonnet of scarlet cloth, trimmed and crossed with

broad silver lace, not unlike the Albanian skull-cap.

She was tall, and well, though slightly, shaped ; and held herself, like all Circassians, men or women, very erect. With the latter, the effect produced by their tightly compressing their loins from infancy is even somewhat ungraceful, giving a certain protrusion to the body behind and before, and a stiffness, particularly in walking, to their carriage. Her costume, being that of all Circassian maidens, consisted of the bonnet of scarlet cloth I have described, a bodice of blue silk, with a row of silver studs in front, a girdle, fastened very low by large silver clasps in the shape of shells, and beneath her *anteri* of striped silk, the loose Turkish trousers, or *shalvar* ; from these there peeped a pair of white and delicate feet, which in the house it is the fashion to leave uncovered, but to go out of doors they put on ornamented pattens or morocco slippers.

Such is a sketch, however imperfect, of the daughter ; but of the mother who stood by her side, beyond a white *khasmak*, or veil, and a loose wrapper of checked calico, instead of a *feridge*, in which the good lady was muffled to the nose, in the Turkish style, the deponent having seen nothing, can nothing tell. This distinction between married women and maids, the former being

veiled, and the latter unveiled, is everywhere observed in the Caucasus, whether it be that, in the partial adoption of the Mussulman usage, they deemed it too great a sacrifice to conceal the mares they had to dispose of, or whether woman in their eyes be a treasure to be hoarded only after appropriation. As in the absence of a common language to express ourselves I could not enter into conversation with them, I ordered a musical work box to be brought into the room, and set it going before them for their amusement. They were all, particularly the ladies, pleased and astonished at it; Hafiza, in her girlish delight, quite forgetting the propriety she should have been playing before the Inglis Beyzade in a first interview. Their satisfaction was complete when I deposited my presents, consisting of an assortment of needles and some morocco leathers, at their feet; custom prohibited their receiving them in their hands; and after a hasty survey of the room, which was as unfurnished as my own, with the exception of a pile of large boxes containing their bedding, a loom in which they manufactured their own cloth, some spindles, and other implements of female industry, I made my salaam, and withdrew.

At the recommendation of a friend who was acquainted with the manners of the country, I had,

previous to setting out for it, filled a large trunk with such presents as I thought would be acceptable to my entertainers—English pistols, swords, watches, and boxes of fine gunpowder; also needles, work-boxes, ornaments, and chains of Paris metal for the women. A trunk so lined and furnished, I naturally anticipated while packing it, would prove a *cornucopia* whence I should scatter favours, to be reaped in golden opinions for me wherever I came. Such is the futility of human calculations! it turned out, on the contrary, a very box of Pandora, diffusing around me envy, hatred, cupidity, and every evil passion. Such of the chiefs as received presents looked less at the positive than the comparative value; and comparisons, we know, are odious: then those who received none, forming of course a vast majority, felt very sore and indignant; and in the meanwhile, till my treasures were exhausted—a happy consummation when it arrived!—they were besieged in a way that was anything but agreeable to my feelings.

I shall hereafter enter more fully into the causes that make begging, which we consider so disgraceful, quite allowable and honourable in this country, and content myself with stating at present, that as far as regards the community of goods, Saint Simon would find his system long since realized

in the Caucasus; and to see and to wish for—to wish and to ask for, are all one and the same thing. So much I was bound to say in justice to the Circassians; nor should that which I am about to relate operate to their prejudice, being rather an illustration of the abuses which a system, though itself founded in the purest generosity, can in sordid bosoms and in the corruption of our nature give rise to. With this “*avis aux lecteurs*,” I shall proceed to tell a story of my host.

In person he was tall, dark, and grave as a Castilian, a man of few words, but whose sad and serious countenance interested me greatly. On the first day of my arrival, as I have already said, he kept himself most respectfully aloof, and it was only by dint of much persuasion he could be prevailed upon to sit down. But on the next day, having established himself in the suburbs of my good graces, he ventured on a nearer *reconnaissance*, and gradually edging himself towards me, squatted at length close to my couch. Here, though he continued to say nothing, he looked a great deal, and I sympathized with what I took to be his patriotic sufferings. But when, on the third day, he grasped my hand, and sighed repeatedly, I could almost have wept for one whose heart I thought was inwardly bleeding over the wrongs of his country; in short, I felt I could do anything,

or make any sacrifice, for so good a man. The reader may judge, therefore, I felt rather surprised and disconcerted when, through the intervention of the Hadji, he all at once begged as a particular favour that I would give him my telescope, the possession of which, he said, would make his hamlet the happiest in Circassia. The telescope was a large and valuable one; yet though I began to have my misgivings of the man, I desired the Hadji to tell him that he should have it when I left the country, but that in the meantime I had occasion for it myself in my travels. In answer to this, he suggested, that as he intended to accompany me in all my peregrinations, he would carry it for me. I consented to this arrangement, and he accordingly attended me on my route for three days, at the end of which time, he begged I would give him a pistol, which being flatly refused to him, he immediately disappeared with the telescope.

It is needless to add, that though I now saw clearly through the one, I was never destined to see through the other again.

CHAPTER IV.

Circassian antiquities—Departure from Pchat—Visit to Indar Oglou—Superstitions—Descent of Russian troops on the coast—View from the mountains—Mystification.

ALL that is to be found in the neighbourhood of Pchat, or, I may say, in Circassia, in the shape of antiquities, may be summed in a very few words. There is a mouldering wooden cross on the acclivity, not far from the sea, which, while it probably still attests the zeal of the Georgian queen, Thamar, who laboured to spread the light of Christianity on these shores, has long ceased to convey the slightest knowledge of Christianity, or a ray of its light, to the Circassians. Those who accompanied us, it is true, doffed their bonnets on approaching it; but on asking why they did so,

they answered me, with a shrug, that their fathers had done so before them. Shreds of cloth were attached to the wood, which I was told were meant for votive offerings; also to tie up the malady of those who placed them there. Painful as it may be to a Christian to see the emblem of his faith become thus to "dumb forgetfulness a prey," it is a fate which attends every monument of antiquity in this country. Oblivion drops her veil alike over all.

There are two descriptions of tombs to be seen here; one, the tumulus or cairn, a heap of rude stones, in some instances of great height and circumference; and the other a cenotaph, for no remains have been found near it, composed of fine ponderous flat stones, four in a quadrangle of five or six feet, and one at the top. Through one of the upright stones is a hole, about a foot in diameter, made in a well-described circle, with a smooth orifice: the inside is empty. These edifices, kept together by the very solidity of their truly Cyclopeian materials, have suggested to the natives, who have lost every clue to the real purpose for which they were constructed, the story that they were built by the giants as houses for the pigmies—not that "small infantry warred on by cranes," but a nation of light horsemen, mounted

on hares instead of chargers. These, they say, were the aboriginal inhabitants of the Caucasus. With respect to any other ruins or remains, fortresses, monuments, or chapels, they have one answer to all inquiries—that is, “they are Genny-vis” (Genoese), and they will not trouble themselves, or expect you should trouble yourself further on the matter. Genoa has much to answer for in the way of ruins (whatever hand she may have had in building) here as well as in Turkey; “lone mother of dead empires,” she is responsible for them all.

But this was no time, I was soon aware, however inviting to such dreams the soft tranquillity of these drowsy vales, to indulge in the visions and to ponder over the relics of the past; the hour itself was pregnant with events, superior in importance to any these valleys had hitherto been the theatre of, and by which that tranquillity was so speedily and so fearfully to be interrupted. Rumours, like the gusts that prelude the tempest, had already begun to agitate the simple minds of the inhabitants, and cold must have been the bosom that could remain unmoved by their anxiety, or did not kindle with the fire that animated every heart against their oppressors. The object I had immediately in view was to join my countryman,

Mr. Bell, who had been a month in the country, and, according to the intelligence of a messenger who, since my arrival, had come from the interior, had already crossed the mountains, and, surrounded by a gallant host of elders, warriors, and influential chieftains, was at Adhencum, on the plains of the Kuban. Accompanied, therefore, by a band of fifteen warriors, (the imminent dangers to which the families and properties of the inhabitants were now exposed making me cheerfully dispense with a larger escort,) I left Pchat on the 24th of May.

Our cavalcade, which issued from the yard of our konag amidst the cries of "Ogmafi! ogmafi!" (Farewell! farewell!) from the assembled neighbourhood, presented a train as motley and picturesque almost as that of the pilgrims to Canterbury. Foremost of all, borne by my Greek, whom I had constituted my beiraktar, or standard-bearer, fluttered in the morning breeze the white arrows and stars on the field of green silk, already familiar, I presume, to the English public as the national banner of Circassia. The standard-bearer himself, with his dashing dress of the Islands; the embroidered jacket and redundant trowsers; his gallant bearing and military glee at finding himself once more on a war-saddle, formed no contemptible figure-head to the procession. After

him came Alcide Bey, (the metamorphosed writer of these volumes,) having Islam Gheri Indar Oglou on his right, and his rogue of a Hadji on his left. The former with the bow, quiver, and costume, the gentle and dignified demeanour I have already described; the latter jogging along in the high turban, autery, and shalvar of the Turk, as fidgety and talkative as my other companion was grave and sedate. As for myself, the dress I wore was like my sentiments, at that time in a state of transition; nor had I yet renounced my European surtout, or all my European prejudices. The costume of the rest of my train, composed of my servants and escort, exhibited much the same variety.

The first part of the journey was over the stony and dried-up stream of Pchat, a spendthrift torrent, compelled quickly to retrench, but leaving evident traces of its former profusion, in a channel upwards of two hundred feet in breadth. As it occupies the whole bottom of the valley, and the mountains (those to the left dividing it from the sea) descend to it abruptly, the horses, which are here unshod, advanced painfully over the rocks and pebbles. About three miles from the shore, in one of the shelving hollows to the left, wider and of more gradual declivity than the others, is the house of Indar Oglou: it is completely covered

in front by an orchard, the fruit-trees of various kinds extending their ranks, as the valley widens, on a carpet of the brightest verdure, down to the margin of the stream. In the shade of some large walnut-trees in front, and by the side of a glassy rivulet, was spread a rug and cushion of silk. We here dismounted, and our horses were as usual tied to the trees. Refreshments were offered to us, which, having only just breakfasted, we declined; but as a temptation it was presumed no Englishman could resist, they produced, with much complacency, what I also refused to swallow—a cup of brandy.

A messenger having been dispatched to the house, Mehemet Indar Oglou himself, supported by two domestics, and attended by a Turkish dragoman, made his appearance from the orchard. He had risen from his bed to receive me, and there was exhaustion in his languid air and unsettled eye; both, however, were too strongly pronounced for sickness to suppress their character, displaying at once the craft which, during a prosperous life of a hundred years, had steered him through the shoals and quicksands of the most turbulent periods, and (what in the stiffnecked old ouzden was still more plainly developed) the more than Circassian pride by which his fortunes had been so nearly shipwrecked. His head was thrown

back with an air of much *hauteur*, which was not less discernible in the expression of the mouth and chin, unshaded by anything but a short moustache. He was dressed in a long loose tunic of fine blue cloth of foreign manufacture. After the usual ceremonies, he seated himself near me in the grass, and through the medium of his dragoman began a conversation, which warmed as it proceeded.

“ Our only hope at present,” said he, “ is centred in England ; the Sultan has deserted us. At one time I thought it preferable to have the Russians for friends instead of enemies, but I was deceived ; their only intention is, and has ever been, to make slaves of us ; and that we must resist to the death. It is, nevertheless, difficult for a poor and divided people like ourselves to contend against power and resources like those of Russia. Would to God I could see an English fleet off this coast. I do not wish to live an instant longer. You alone can deliver us, save us from the Russians, and save,” he added, his keen grey eyes kindling with the sense of injuries, “ oh ! save us from ourselves.”

Here was fair language and hopeful dispositions, although there might be some lack of sincerity in the one, and a leaven of disappointed ambition in the other. How, indeed, can it be expected that the feelings of a man like this, so long employed

in all their strength and subtlety about the petty interests of his family and his clan, should at once embrace with the same ardour the comprehensive views of the statesman and patriot. I replied to him in almost the same general terms that he had himself adopted; that much remained to be done on the part of his countrymen in the establishment of order, union, and a recognised authority, before any Englishman could hold out hopes that his government would ever treat with, much less afford them direct assistance. It should be the aim, then, of every man who valued his country or religion to promote these objects as the only means of rescuing their necks from the impending yoke. I finished our conference, in the course of which the old man displayed much real or affected enthusiasm, by pointing to the standard I had brought with me, and which, now planted in the turf before us, exhibited the device I have alluded to; and by telling him at the same time, "when the strength and intelligence of the Caucasus were united in the same manner as the stars and arrows in their banner, wherein they were placed as their emblems, he might hope for everything, though hope in the assistance of England would be then superfluous, for he would have nothing to fear from Russia."

When we had mounted our horses, the brandy was again presented as a stirrup cup, and we

resumed our march. Continuing for some miles to ascend the stream as before, we at length diverged from it by a path to the left, which wound along the sides of the hills. Those to the right now assumed a bolder and more rugged outline, and to one of them, of more grotesque appearance than the others, my attention was drawn by the Hadji. "That hill," he said, "that strange looking hill, elbowing the sky yonder to the left, is possessed by the devil. Yes," continued he, gravely, seeing that I treated his assertion as a joke, "the devil possesses every foot of it; and I would fain see the man that will venture to fetch a stick from the wood at the top, or sow pasta in the fields on its side."

As he proceeded to unfold to me this popular superstition, I naturally took a closer survey of the peak, or promontory, that had given rise to it. Its most remarkable feature was, that it was super-added to the main ridge like a hunch on a camel's back, or rather flung from it, as it were, and suspended, with its waving crest of foliage, like some enormous billow on the cur.. Issuing from this wood occasionally strange noises had been heard. Groans, shrieks, and clanking of chains, now and then diversified by diabolical peals of laughter, had distinctly announced that the very peculiar festivities, vulgarly called "devils' delights," were

kept up in its precincts with great spirit; in short, neither man, woman, nor child, had a doubt on the matter—it was the haunt of demons! Those who had ventured—for some had been fool-hardy enough to intrude on their revels—had either never returned to give a description of them, or, like Bully Bottom, had been “strangely translated,” their chins having been brought into juxtaposition with the napes of their necks, and their faces, in that untoward predicament, making on all who met them grimaces at once horrible and ridiculous.

Among other marvels, no less religiously believed, there was reported to be in the circle of this enchanted wood an immense brazen caldron, and that a pretty “hell-broth,” as may easily be supposed, was concocted in it; the greensward where it was placed was also said to be fireproof, and the grass to have resisted every attempt that had been made to burn it. Nor was this all; a white horse, without a rider, was at stated intervals seen amusing itself by galloping backwards and forwards over the ridge of the hill, in a very awful manner; indeed, not that white horses were scarce in the country, or that they were not accustomed to indulge in similar pastimes, but a courser like this, in size a perfect monster, could be of no earthly, certainly (a rather small one, by-the-bye) of no Caucasian, breed.

Proceeding always at a foot pace, it being "*infra dig.*," as I was informed, for people of consequence to move any faster, we now struck into a wilder country; but in what direction we went, having no compass with me at the time, it is impossible for me to tell; it was certainly in such a zig-zag, up-and-down manner as proved quite bewildering. We were sometimes toiling up a precipitous path, made, not by Macadam, you may be sure, but by the mountain torrent—a rather rougher road-maker—sometimes diving into a romantic glen; and as, beneath the double gloom of overhanging hills and "melancholy boughs," we wound our way to the stream at its bottom, the Circassians, no doubt inspired by the *loci genius*, would burst involuntarily into a wild and plaintive lament over some fallen chieftain; one of the party singing in a subdued tone a hurried sort of chant or recitative, not unlike our litanies, the dirge answered at the close by the full and mellow chorus of his countrymen, while "Ay! A-ri-ra!" swelled and died away through these their woodland aisles, with an effect more beautiful, perhaps, than in those of a cathedral.

After a long and rather fatiguing jaunt through these defiles, the scenery began to open on us again, and we descended into the main valley of Hyderbey. The mountains here rise on the left almost as perpendicular as a wall, folding in a

semicircle like the inside of a stupendous bastion. Nor were these natural defences misplaced; for on the other side of them was the Russian fortress of Ghelendjek. The shades of evening coming on, our party came to a halt, and held a short consultation; matters being arranged among them, Islam Gheri, applying the lash vigorously to his horse, dashed off at full speed, and immediately disappeared among the bushes of a neighbouring dell. They had fixed upon our evening's konag, and he was dispatched to announce our approach to it; ourselves, in the meantime, more slowly unravelling the leafy labyrinth by which it was concealed. As we came in sight of the house, a whole cry of shepherd and house-dogs opened upon us at once, barking and jumping about our horses at a furious rate; and when they could frighten them by no other means, tugging maliciously at their tails. We were soon, however, relieved from our four-footed escort by a less noisy troop of attendants, who welcomed us to the konag in a most cordial manner.

This guest-house, and indeed all others that I subsequently visited, differed in no material point from the one I have already described, which will therefore save me a further description. There were the same comfortable couch, so welcome a luxury after the fatigues of a mountain ride,—the

same cheerful blaze on the hearth, (for the houses are slight, and the evenings are chilly here in May;) in short, the same courteous alacrity to provide for every comfort, and to anticipate every wish of their guest.

Refreshments, consisting of cakes, honey, and clotted cream, were set before us immediately on our arrival, but it was easy to see that a far more formidable feast was in reserve for us—servants, “on hospitable thoughts intent,” were seen rushing to and fro in the yard, and the bleating of reluctant sheep, with the shrieks of expiring poultry, sounded an unequivocal note of preparation.

In the meantime, the lower end of the room was, as usual, crowded with visitors; but our host had not yet made his appearance. He was keeping guard that night on the heights that overlook Ghelendjek, it being the custom of the neighbourhood to perform that duty in rotation, that they might have timely notice if the garrison of that fortress should sally out on a marauding expedition. Within the last few days their vigilance had been increased, and the sentinels doubled, for an unusual stir in the place, and the arrival of transports and ships of war, had given them considerable uneasiness.

The Circassians are great newsmongers; after the customary salutations, the first question is, *Khabermi?*

(What news?) to which it must be also confessed they are seldom at a loss for an answer, and I have been often amused at the gravity with which, in the absence of real matter, they listen to one another's monstrous inventions. On this occasion, however, I was disposed to be anything but entertained, for among other things it was stated, with as much composure as if I had been wholly unconcerned in the business, that Sefer Bey's messenger, Nogai Ismael, having landed on the coast of Djanhote, was circulating the same sinister reports to our prejudice as at Sinope. He had asserted that Daoud Bey (Mr. Urquhart) had been recalled from Constantinople by his government, in consequence of his being detected in a secret correspondence with Russia, to whom, it was added, by way of circumstance, he had actually betrayed Circassia and its cause for (*quantum mercede!*) the sum of forty thousand piasters, or four hundred pounds sterling. Of course all concerned with him, including Mr. Bell and his friend, were to have their share of this magnificent bribe, and to be implicated in the same treachery. I was at a loss, in my first surprise, whether to resent or to laugh at these accusations, which, however absurd, might seriously endanger, if believed, our lives or liberties.

But I soon discovered that it was useless to be

angry about anything: a hasty and passionate behaviour is regarded as a sign of great weakness, if not of positive guilt. I therefore took a lesson from the apparent coolness with which such serious charges were advanced, and met them much in the same indifferent manner. But, however I might judge the kindness and hospitality I was receiving to be proofs of little faith being attached to these reports, and though observing that in spite of them Mr. Urquhart was invariably spoken of with respect, and even with veneration, I could be by no means sure of the extent to which they had operated, since, from a people of such habitual coolness and courtesy, the first intimation of hostile feeling I received might very probably be an apology for the necessity they were under of selling me to the Abasseks or of throwing me into the sea.

A messenger having been despatched to announce our arrival to our host, he presented himself about two hours after, wrapped in a great shaggy dark-coloured cloak of felt, with which every warrior is provided when on a journey or an expedition. Though welcoming me with much *empressement*, qualified as usual with many apologies for his inability to receive me as I deserved, I could see from the cloud on his brow that something had occurred to discompose him. His coun-

tenance was expressive of deep concern, and, indeed, considering what he had that day, from his station on the hills been spectator of, and which he proceeded to relate to us, it very well might be. In addition to the transports laden with provisions and warlike stores, there had, during the course of the day, put into Ghelendjek fourteen ships of war and a steamer, full of troops, infantry and cavalry.

From the ground they occupied in landing, covering the whole east of the bay, our host judged there could not be less than 10,000 men. It was certain that the campaign was about to open with operations on an extensive scale; and another season of burning, bloodshed, and devastation was before them; for they were not only threatened by the armament at Ghelendjek, but an army was reported to be concentrating at Ekaterinodur, on the Kuban. Our host was evidently much disheartened with what he had witnessed, and seemed to have been contrasting the well-appointed battalions and well-served artillery of the Russian army with their own scattered and ill-provided forces—destitute even of what would appear most indispensable—powder and shot.

Never shall I forget the bitter smile and look of despair with which the brave man shook his empty cartridge pipes, and to every encouragement I

could suggest, answered sadly, *Beirout yok—cour-shoon-yok*, (no powder—no lead.) His tone and gesture went to my very heart. Having agreed to accompany me to Adhencum, he joined our party next morning with a reinforcement of about twenty horsemen. Our party now made a respectable and gallant appearance, and we advanced gaily along the banks of the Hyderbey. The hills on either side are densely covered, producing every variety of tree that adorns an English landscape, — oak, elm, birch, hazel, &c. ; and though presenting to the eye at this season but one brilliant livery of the freshest green, diversified, however, and broken into most picturesque confusion, now closing with their leafy honours so near the stream that the latter, “thick as those that strew the brooks in Vallambrosia,” — “high, overarched embower,” and now separating as they gradually retreat, range on range, into the distant sky.

Those on our right, when we had proceeded about two hours, terminated in a headland, and opened rather abruptly into some defiles. Through these, winding with a graceful sweep, descended a road, the first I had seen in Circassia. I was about to express my satisfaction when I was told it was a Russian and military road, made to introduce the horrors of their war-

fare into the bosom of scenes so calm and beautiful as these. But whatever merit they claim in making, they had rarely the benefit of using it; neither, strictly speaking, could they call it their own, for though they might pass it occasionally with an army, and, to facilitate the passage, they had cleared away the neighbouring thickets, yet the stockades of stakes, interwoven with branches, erected in their place, shewed pretty clearly that a fearful and bloody toll was exacted by the Circassians.

The road, after descending from the hills, unites itself with the Hyderbey, and accompanies that stream in its windings, as it turns to the left towards Ghelendjek. As I drank of the water of this river, which was presented to me in a leathern bottle, I shuddered to think how often it had been, and how soon it might be again, defiled by the blood of the invader. The road, as I have already said, penetrates a mountain pass, the further entrance of which is guarded by the small fortress of Nicolai; it thence proceeds to the foot of Aboon and the Kuban. The Circassians, of course, avail themselves of this road as often as they have occasion for it; but our present route was a more arduous one, leading over the mountains to the west of it. We were upwards of two hours making our way by a winding bridle-path, to the

top ; but were amply repaid by the glorious prospect it presented on reaching it.

Before us, at the feet of these mountains, which sank into them in long sweeping ridges and ravines, were the plains of the Kuban. These were bounded in their turn by that river, describing, as it received their tributary streams, a grand semicircle from north to west. Stretching beyond this, and finally lost in the haze of distance, were the interminable steppes of Russia. Nor if we turned in the direction we had come was the prospect less attractive : there, almost parallel with those on which we stood, rose another range of mountains, with a crowd of lesser and thickly wooded hills, rolled on one another like a sea, between, and glimpses, through the breaks of the further chain, of the dark-blue element, and the solitary cruiser gliding thereon, and haunting the coast like some grim spectre beyond.

But my feelings while standing upon this commanding position, and surveying the wild and impracticable country beneath, were not confined to admiration ; they partook of the proud and conscious security which creates and confirms the independent spirit of the mountaineer. I could not conceive how anybody who saw it as I did then could dream of the conquest of such a country, and I could have wished at that moment to

have had by my side the Russian general, to have enjoyed the despair which I believed such a prospect must have inspired him with, and to have asked him by what plan of operations, in this inextricable confusion, this chaos of hill and valley, river and forest, he proposed to reduce it. If he dispersed his troops, they were sure to be cut off in detail by an armed population, possessing the advantage of local information; if his columns advanced *en masse*, all they could do was to wander through some solitary defiles, harassed on every side by the fire of an invisible foe, and compelled at length, by the want of provisions, to retreat. I was at once convinced, and remain so to this day, and that from a view of the lower range of mountains alone, and of course the conclusion would be strengthened by a visit to the primary ones, that the only chance of their subjugation was in the connexion of their inhabitants with those of the plains.

The hilly part of the country, as I have observed before, is chiefly occupied by forests, yielding, however, occasionally to wide tracts of pasture, with a plentiful sprinkling of cattle, and chequered all over, even to the mountain tops, with bright green patches of corn and millet. These latter, from the growing insecurity of the plains, are becoming every day more numerous, and clear-

ings, effected principally by burning, were in progress wherever we came. Judging from the number of cottages, which, though we might vainly have sought for them below, were from our elevated position visible enough, and scattered over it in every direction, the country must have been very populous. After enjoying for some minutes the wide spreading prospect of the plains, we plunged into the forests which separated us from them. The descent was at first steep and gloomy, but we emerged at length into a more open and champaign country, threading as we proceeded a succession of romantic glades.

One of these in particular, less perhaps from its intrinsic beauty than the contrast afforded by its character of deep seclusion to the open magnificence of the scenes I have just described, produced an effect upon me I may well call magical, certainly which no scenery had ever done before. Gradually opening to the breadth of about a hundred yards, it was folded on each side by a low, steep, and woody amphitheatre of rising ground, beyond which nothing was visible but the cloudless azure above, rivalled only by the hues of the emerald with which the floor of this natural oratory was suffused. Indeed, the holiness of this sequestered spot had been felt and confessed many ages ago, as was testified by an immense and moss-

grown cairn, the chosen abode of rest of some rude hero of antiquity, raised at its further extremity.

From the centre of this tumulus, overshadowing it in every part, and not unlike the plumes that form a canopy to the hearse, rose a cluster of gigantic beech trees. I was engaged in the survey of this interesting object, when our party, who were somewhat in advance of me, were suddenly hailed with the customary salutation of "*Wus haf she*," (or *Bon voyage*,) by another troop, consisting of five horsemen, who issued from the neighbouring woods. They drew up their horses, and came to a halt on both sides, and I observed that many of my own party advanced, and gave successively a fraternal embrace to the leader of the opposite one, as to a countryman returned from foreign parts. Looking at him as I approached, I thought I must have seen him before; and on a closer scrutiny, I felt rage fast getting the better of discretion, as, notwithstanding his change of dress from the Turkish to the Circassian, I recognised, beyond a doubt, the person of our determined enemy and malignant traducer, Nogai Ismael. I could see that the traitor studiously avoided to encounter my eye; I therefore rode up to him, and asked if he had forgotten me. Upon

which, affecting to recollect himself, he saluted me.

I saw the time was not yet come for an explanation, but I was determined not to part from him without one, and I accordingly kept my eye upon him. As he was himself proceeding to the National Assembly, at Adhencum, he had no excuse for not joining our party, and therefore accompanied us; but towards the evening, as we were approaching to the house fixed upon for our konag, he suddenly struck off, at full gallop, into a jungle to the left. But, resolved not to lose sight of him, I followed, as fast as my horse could carry me, the same path, and being better mounted, quickly overtook and detained him. We were soon joined by the rest of the cavalcade, who appeared much surprised at my impetuosity. I was now prepared for the worst, and determined, come what might, to bring things to an issue.

But this was not so easy as I imagined, for Nogai again flatly denied having circulated the reports attributed to him, and on appealing to those who escorted me, and almost all of whom had alluded to them, they appeared suddenly to have lost all recollection on the subject, and even the Hadji, who had interpreted for them, seemed to think there must be some mistake. Truth, I per-

ceived, was an object by no means admired here for her abstract charms,—ever welcome when in good company, that is, with safety and advantage on her side, but as resolutely discountenanced when attended with any mischief or loss, and whether it be, as some writers suppose, because of more difficult attainment, readily sacrificed, as in the present case, for peace and quietness.

It will be seen, moreover, in the dissertation I mean hereafter to enter into, with respect to the tribes and institutions of the Circassians, that their tendency, from the complexity of the relations they introduce among them, is to render them a nation of diplomatists.

Thus unexpectedly baffled, I was compelled to digest my indignation as well as I could, though by no means moderated, as may well be supposed, by the grin of triumphant villany with which Nogai told me I would have full satisfaction from him at Adhencum.

CHAPTER V.

Opening of the campaign—The gathering of the Circassians to oppose their invaders.—Grape shot—The medjilis, or national council—Meeting with Mr. Bell.

THE konag where we passed the night was a collection of a dozen or so of cottages, which we might call a village, but for the circumstance of their being tenanted by one family, or rather, the different branches of that family, to the second and third generations, all flourishing together, and connected with the same parent stem. In the western provinces, I have never met with different families residing in the same locality; and I believe this isolation is owing to the mountainous and broken character of the country itself fostering that jealous spirit of independence which makes every man

prefer being the monarch of his own little fen, rather than the member of a mutually-dependent community.

In the absence of similar causes, in Zadooz and Danigoc, provinces composed entirely of plains, large villages are to be found; a misfortune in one respect, that they are in greater alarm of the Russian armies, which can thus fall on so many victims "at one fell swoop." We were welcomed and waited upon by the patriarch of this little hamlet, in person, to whom the duties of hospitality seemed to give new life and spirit. Indeed, it was a most pleasing sight to see him bustling beneath his burden of fourscore in the discharge of them. They were poor people in this konag, we were told, yet was the capacious bowl of *boza* duly presented to us; nor, of less capacity, was the reservoir of broth, or the boiled sheep, cut and ranged in enormous pieces on the fortifications of *pastâ* aforesaid, wanting to grace our visit. But war, and the rumours of war, were now engaging the attention of the whole population.

It seemed to have begun in good earnest, and Williammenoff, at the head of 10,000 men, combining his movement, it appeared, with the descent on the coast, had crossed the Kuban, and was already at blows with the Circassians. Stragglers from the scene of action, dispersing for the night

in the neighbouring hamlets, now dropped in one after the other ; and eager questions, various and confused answers, were as usual put and given in every direction. Mixed with the lugubrious “ *Wai, wai, wai !* ” sounding the knell of some favourite chieftain, in one corner, might be heard the cheerful chirrup of “ *Hai, hai !* ” exulting in the feats of a more fortunate one in another. The Russians, it was reported, had this time brought colonists with them, to settle in the vicinity of Aboon, in the same manner as they had done at Anapa,—news that proved by no means agreeable. “ The dirty infidels,” said the Hadji, “ are coming upon us pell mell, themselves, their families, and their pigs. Allāh ! Allāh ! Allāh ! ”

Determined to join Mr. Bell and the chiefs at Adhencum that same day, we were stirring early that morning, and found the whole establishment in a bustle ; some were preparing to accompany us to the *Medjilis*, or assembly of the nation, others “ borne to battle strife.” While we were there, a string of about a dozen of the latter, of which some were lads of not more than fourteen or fifteen, entered the farm-yard, where they unslung and deposited their rifles much in the same way that we see a troop of itinerant haymakers come and lay down their scythes in England. Their harvest was of a different kind, but their look of

quiet determination promised that their four or five charges of powder, (for the stock in many of their *hassirs* was no greater,) and which they had come, it seemed, some of them many leagues to burn against the enemy, would be laid out to the very best advantage.

I now began to have a clearer idea of this warfare, which, within a few years, had entirely changed its character. Formerly, when confined to border hostilities between the Circassians and the Tchernamortsy Cossacks, it consisted of encounters of cavalry on the plain, in which the latter, being worse mounted and armed, and much less expert than their adversaries, got so roughly handled that their numbers were very much thinned, and they were in consequence so greatly discouraged and demoralized, that the former, who despised them, would engage and beat their parties with almost any odds in their favour.

Russia at length adopted another system. Leaving the Tchernamortsies to act on the defensive, and to man the chain of posts along the Kuban, and bringing with her army not more than a thousand of them, for the protection of its flanks, she thenceforward took the field with cannon and infantry; and the Circassians, after repeated attempts to break the Russian squares, in which the best

and bravest of the warriors fell victims to their own rashness, and the contempt they had imbibed for the enemy in their conflicts with the Tchernamortsies, began on their side to change their opinions and their tactics. On the approach of the Russians, part of them would set fire to their houses and retreat precipitately with their families and cattle to the mountains, while the rest, gathering from all sides at the report of the first gun, would hover about them in flying parties, and infest them in front, rear, and flank, as the ground or occasion served. Against such a mode of annoyance, particularly in the defiles, there was no remedy; indeed, Williammenoff himself candidly admitted it to some of the natives, in a parley he was holding with them.

"Meet us fairly," said the general, "and we will beat you in any number; but now, after harassing and provoking us like a set of hornets, when we seek to make our acknowledgments, you are no more to be found," said he, laughing, and throwing a handful of gunpowder in the air, "than these grains in the grass."

There was one innovation, however, in Muscovite warfare, which I found they by no means approved of, and that was grape-shot. Its effects they described as something altogether awful, and which nobody who had not seen could form an idea of.

Their guns, "*Anasena sichtim*," "their mothers be defiled!" instead of sending, as they used to do, a single ball, which came whistling over our heads, and, by the blessing of Providence, found a lodging for the most part in the side of the hill, now vomit each of them ten thousand at the very least, which come tearing and smashing everything about us like a hail-storm. Under such a shower it would be folly for us to keep together, and we therefore scatter our forces as much as possible.

"Now if we only had cannon to employ against them," added an old warrior, looking very archly, "their battalions would be no more able to keep their ranks than we are; and being once dispersed, our cavalry would play the devil with them, as before."

Messenger now came on messenger, and a note was brought me from Mr. Bell, stating that the assembled chieftains were impatiently awaiting my arrival at Adhencum; yet could I not prevail on our party to advance at a quicker pace than the stately one prescribed by custom, and we accordingly followed the devious course of the *Shipsagoor*, with as much deliberation as if there was no important business in hand, and the Russians a hundred miles off. We had soon, however, convincing and audible proofs to the contrary, for on

leaving that stream, and crossing over the ridge to the right, the din of conflict announced that we were drawing nearer and nearer to the scene of it; and though the mountains were towering and the woods waving around us in the most tranquil sublimity, it nevertheless grew every moment more loud and furious, but whether above or below, or from what side it proceeded, was by no means apparent.

In the meantime, I could see some changes had taken place in the order of our march, and one or two of our party, who had before headed it like lions, were now advancing very leisurely in the rear: among these was my loquacious Hadji, who seemed for once to have given a respite to his tongue, and only to have occupation for his eyes, which were now busily engaged in peering about him, right and left, with the greatest appearance of interest. The sounds of conflict had truly become exciting, and conveyed to me as distinct an idea of the work of death going on as if I had been an eye-witness of it. The scattered quick-dropping and irregular fire that was kept up, proceeded, there could be no doubt, from the rifles of the Circassians; while the rattling volley of musquetry, the loud, heavy crash accompanying the wholesale discharge of grape, so peculiarly unpalatable to them, and which in their mountain defiles was caught up

and bandied about with the most appalling uproar, it was equally clear was the voice of Russian and European warfare. Mingled with these might just be heard the faint hurrah of one party, answered by the shrill, wild war-whoop of another, which it was probably sent to dislodge from its ambuscade.

At length, through the medium of my Greek, for the Hadji, as I have already said, was dumb-founded, I obtained an explanation of the affair. Between the low range of hills to the right, and the mountains rising beyond them, ran the very road we had crossed the day before, and by which Williammenoff, having left Aboon that morning, was now fighting his way through the pass of Nicolai to Ghelendjek : I longed very much for a sight of him, but the Circassians said it would now be productive of delay, and it was a treat for which they promised me many other opportunities would occur before I left the country.

We accordingly pursued the route to Adhencum, and alighted about ten o'clock, A. M., at a house which I was told was at an hour's distance from the place where Mr. Bell and the chiefs were assembled. Anxious to join my countryman, who was now so near, I naturally thought this stoppage rather unseasonable ; but I soon discovered that though the road was plain and easy enough, there was still an obstacle between us, in the eyes of the

Circassians at least, (as huge and formidable as Elborouz itself,) and that was, a point of etiquette. It appears they had not been able to make up their minds who was the greater personage of the two, Mr. Bell or myself; and being as tenacious, with regard to certain forms, as the Medes and Persians are said to have been with their laws, they were unable to decide (on a question, it would appear, as puzzling as that of Mahomet and the mountain) who should first go to the other. I found that my rights to precedence had been strenuously supported by the Hadji and the Greek; but, vexed and ashamed that in a crisis like the present such frivolity should interfere with public business, I waived these ridiculous pretensions at once, telling them that we were neither of us employed by our government, and such distinctions in our country were unknown. From that time, however, on the ground of seniority, I invariably conceded to Mr. Bell the honours it entitled him to, the chief, if not only one, of which was the seat at the chimney corner, esteemed the most honourable, and distinguished from the other by being exalted full three inches above the floor.

I was therefore desirous of continuing our journey as soon as we could, but found it was impossible to leave the house without being previously convinced by the most substantial proofs of the

hospitality of its master ; and on looking out in the yard I stood perfectly aghast at the array of tables and dishes, at least forty in number, which were marshalled from one end of it to the other. All these, if I did not give battle to them, it was at least expected I should pass in review : to see that I did so, our host stood by in person, a compact, square-built man, sprucely attired in his coarse tunic, trimmed, like that of all Circassian dandies, with a profusion of silver lace ; the ugliness of his countenance, full of fierceness and cunning, neutralized almost by the amiable, if not disinterested, desire to please. I was assured, moreover, in confidential whispers, by many of the company, that he was *kerkin ! iguit !* some of the few Turkish words in the Circassian vocabulary, signifying “courageous, valiant,” and intended, no doubt, as a hint that he was an undeniable object for the display of my munificence. It was chiefly as a bush-ranger he was distinguished, and he that very morning, after dispatching with his own hands, I was assured, seven Russians, was now assiduously attending to the duties of his guest-house ; in short, a Circassian Hotspur, like him of the north—“He that kills me some six or seven dozen of Scots at a breakfast, washes his hands, and says to his wife, Fye upon this quiet life !” As a tribute of respect to so much valour, I presented him with some flints and gun-

powder, also a chain of Paris metal, which were received with as much pride and satisfaction as a courtier would shew on being decorated.

On resuming our march, I found that our party was more than trebled; and as it swept along the fine open plains of Adhencum, (a cheerful prospect, by-the-bye, both to man and horse, after the fatigue of the mountains,) it was augmented to the number of about 300, and I felt all the rising enthusiasm which the approaching crisis, in the council and field, with the sight of so many brave fellows rallying around my banner, was calculated to inspire. The erect and martial bearing with which they sat their horses, each man with his rifle slung behind him, and many of them with shirts of mail gleaming from beneath their open-breasted tunics, gave them a truly gallant, though chiefly owing, I believe, to the wild-looking *calpac*, a somewhat ferocious appearance. I was now given to understand that Adhencum, the rendezvous on this occasion, which I had imagined to be the name of some town or village, was no other than a mountain stream, which emptied itself into the Kuban, and, with many others of the same kind, gave its name to the cottages along its banks.

The covert of trees that marked its course now skirted the horizon before us, and when we had arrived at a few hundred yards distance from it,

our party came to a halt. It was waiting, they told me, for another, which was to escort us as a guard of honour to our konag ; and we were presently advised of the approach of the latter, with Haoud Oglu Mansour Bey at its head. This chieftain, I was hastily informed by the Hadji, was the one of most consideration in the country, and I should esteem myself much honoured by the condescension he shewed in attending upon me ; and, to speak the truth, I did feel that honour, and his approach produced a sentiment bordering more upon awe than would perhaps have been inspired by that of the most distinguished individual in Europe. Here, methought, was the foremost man in Circassia—"her voice in council, and in war her sword," owing his elevation to no adventitious circumstances or favour of any potentate alive, his only brevet for it derived from the free though tacit suffrages of his countrymen, and acquired by his personal bravery and sagacity, by the native eloquence that wielded the fierce democracy of the mountains, and by the master mind that rendered them, however rude and intractable, the involuntary vassals of his will.

But I had short time for these speculations, for the individual to whom they referred now made his appearance at the head of another cortège, with an ouzden or noble on each side of him. No

sooner were they in sight than, starting forward with short quick yells, a great number of our own party galloped on as if about to charge them. They were met with the same resolution by horsemen from the other side; rifles and pistols were discharged, and they encountered man to man and horse to horse with such apparent vivacity and good will that, at first, stunned and startled, I scarce knew what to make of it. It was nothing, however, but a representation, as far as it could be carried on among friends, of what, till they had a surfeit of it, formed their favourite occupation; executed to grace the meeting of distinguished persons by the young men, whom they designated, not unappropriately I thought, as *Dely Canns*, wild bloods, or madcaps.

But while these furious proceedings were in progress on both wings, the main body continued to advance from either side as steadily and deliberately as before. On coming together, the whole assembly, following the example of Mansour Bey, dismounted from their horses, and I now gazed on that chieftain, who, after raising his hand to his bonnet in the usual way, stood confronting me in silence, with the feelings of interest his appearance could not fail to excite. He was, seemingly, turned of fifty; somewhat above the middle size, athletic, and stout, though not corpulent, (obesity is there

held in disesteem, and a fat Circassian I never met with). The arms he wore displayed elegance and superior workmanship, but there was nothing in his dress, which, though neat, was of the simplest and coarsest materials, to excite envy in the poorest of his countrymen; while his mutilated foot (for half of it had been frozen off in a winter campaign across the Kuban) made, as he trailed it behind him, a constant but silent appeal on their sympathy.

The wound, though inflicted many years before, still remained open; and there was a look of suppressed suffering on his countenance, faintly mingled with its natural characteristics,—those which make a man at once loved and respected—the benevolence of a warm heart, directed and controlled by the sagacity and firmness of a powerful understanding, imparting together to his large square features a genuine expression of magnanimity. His manners were what in Europe would be styled those of a gentleman; and though complying with the forms and ceremonies indispensable in a Circassian, he did so with an ease, or rather indifference, which plainly shewed his mind was occupied with far weightier concerns.

While engaged in these observations on my side, Mansour Bey, as will readily be supposed, was not idle upon his; and the result of his scrutiny was

not unflattering, for stepping forward with a freedom which, in our relative position, was both graceful and becoming, he exchanged a hearty embrace; after which we both mounted our horses, and rode side by side to the konag, where Mr. Bell was waiting for me, and where was to be held the grand council or *medjilis*.

The attendance on this occasion, without being thronged, for nearly all the younger part of the population, or Dely Canns, were then in waiting upon their Russian visitors, nevertheless, comprised the great proportion of the rank, property, and intelligence of the two provinces of ShapsOOK and Natukvitch,—the Tamatas, Effendis, and the Ouzdens—that is, the elders, judges, and nobles. In short, the assembly was of a character imposing enough to confer an undeniable stamp of authority to all its proceedings. It forms, indeed, in such councils, the chief, if not only point of importance, that they all should feel convinced that they are from character and numbers so constituted as to convey an unequivocal expression of the popular will, for to none other will they submit. For the attainment of this object, it may be thought, a regular representative system would be best calculated; they prefer, however, the confusion and uncertainty which must prevail under their present mode of proceeding, to the betrayal of their in-

terests which might result from the former. So jealous, indeed, is this sovereign people of their power, that no individual will trust his share of it out of his own hands, or even formally delegate it to any particular or any given number of representatives for a moment. Let our radicals, who call so vehemently for universal suffrage, as the *ne plus ultra* of free institutions, remember that in the career of reform there is a step even beyond that—no suffrage at all.

Yet, for all this sturdy independence, there can be no doubt of their being *virtually* represented. Age, experience, prowess, and eloquence, have all their due weight and influence, and, in adapting themselves, and assuming the garb most flattering to the prejudices of the people, render their possessors the decided organs of its opinions. Originally this influence, like the councils in which it predominated, was in great measure confined to a particular district or tribe; but as the pressure from without, arising from Russian ambition, gave birth to more extensive combination, and to national interest, with councils on a greater scale for their direction, that influence, in seeking a wider sphere, naturally derived from the place or tribe where it was founded a representative character.

Not that any freeman in the country abandoned his right of attending those councils personally, and

influencing, as far as he was able, their decisions; but that, from the inconvenience which might result from their neglect of their domestic affairs, or the assemblage of so vast a multitude of councillors on one spot, they were generally satisfied with the attendance, though not expressly sent by them, of the persons in whom they had most confidence. The necessity of these national councils had arisen, as I have said above, from the common danger; and as the sense of that danger extended itself, they, of course, became more important. Already had the dread of Russia, confirmed by the military road which she had opened along the stream of Aboon, between the provinces of Shapsook and Natukvitch, cemented their union. The same alarm was spreading to the Abassaks; and if the construction of another road, as it was threatened, should be attempted there, it is pretty certain that the number of individuals who attend these councils from that province will be so much increased, that their authority will be equally recognised in it. Such were the nature and composition of the present assembly, and many a turbaned Effendi, many a wrinkled and grey-bearded oracle, might be seen arriving from his distant stream or solitary valley, and while he exchanged the Selam Aleicum, looking round him with great excitement, as he felt that, from its

numbers and respectability, its decisions must be law to the two above-mentioned provinces.

But the irruption of the Russian army, though undoubtedly the chief, was not the only circumstance that had drawn them together. There was also the arrival of Nogai Ismael with despatches from their ambassador, Sefer Bey; and last, but not least, the mysterious presence among them of two Englishmen.

Each of these phenomena, it was reported, was perambulating the country with several large boxes laden with miscellaneous treasure from Sultan Mahmoud, intended as a gratification to all deserving and patriotic Circassians, in the number of which, I believe, there was not a man in the country who did not include himself. This credulity, and the pardonable curiosity arising from it, will appear natural enough if it be taken into account that they themselves, carrying all their wardrobe on their backs, have no occasion for baggage; and that we had besides made many presents since our arrival. On the other hand, the sinister reports spread by Nogai Ismael, while they tended to fill their minds with misgivings, made them no less anxious for a solution of the mystery.

As we drew near to our konag, I began first, on looking to the left, to have an idea of a Circassian

council chamber—viz., a magnificent grove of oaks, cleared entirely of underwood, in whose cool and shadowy recesses, and round the moss-grown trunks that served as pillars to the massive roof of foliage above, groups of Tamatas, or elders, were seated on the turf, and apparently engaged in earnest discussion. Arms were suspended, and horses (saddled and bridled) attached to the boughs in every direction.

But while the collective wisdom of the country was thus encountering in the shade, a contest no less keen, though of a different nature, was going on in the adjoining meadow; it consisted of martial and equestrian exercises—one to which the emulation of the *Dely Canns*, assembled from so many quarters, and particularly from the contiguous provinces, could not fail to give rise. But old and young left their respective occupations, and, crowding round at our approach, formed a lane through which we rode to the gate of our konag.

I was here met by Mr. Bell's interpreter, a Georgian, whom I had formerly known at Constantinople, but who was now grown a much greater man than when in lowly attendance on the pachas. As it was he who had to explain the respective merits and pretensions of those who were introduced, he was, in some measure, the

distributor of our favours, and delighted they were to find one in office so easy and accessible. He was constantly pursued by a troop of them, laughing, coaxing, and administering large doses of that which he liked so well—flattery. Nor was he on his part ungrateful to them, nor did his good-humoured vanity take greater pleasure in glorifying himself than in blowing the trumpet for his friends.

Hero after hero, and prince after prince, each more princely or doughty than the other, followed in such rapid succession that we saw his list of worthies would be much longer than that of our presents, and became gradually more circumspect. With the failure of supplies, he lost many of his friends; nay, some of them grew positively uncivil, and then came the far less agreeable task of stripping them of the plumes his imagination had so liberally supplied them with. But at the moment I am now adverting to, he was far from dreaming of the instability of popular favour; our boxes were then full, he was courted by every body, and as he now made his appearance tricked out in some discarded finery he had brought with him from Constantinople, I could see his head was fairly turned with the honours he had been receiving on all hands.

I was by him conducted to the guest-house

occupied by Mr. Bell, and it will be readily believed that our meeting, under such circumstances, was to both parties an interesting one. In exchange for the news I brought him from Constantinople, he gave me a brief sketch of the actual position of affairs, and of what had occurred to him since his arrival. The Circassians had insisted on making him, *nolens volens*, provisional governor of the country—a station, considering the present stormy aspect of their affairs, and their own primitive ideas as to its duties and attributes, a great deal more dignified than desirable. He had not the least objection to admit me to a full and immediate participation of these honours. We found accordingly, after our installation, and notwithstanding the homage paid to us, and the daily assurances of obedience and fidelity paid to us, that our royal prerogatives were of a very equivocal nature.

It is true, we were escorted everywhere by a guard of honour, composed of the most distinguished persons of the two belligerent provinces, but whether intended for the protection and safe custody of our persons and property appeared rather doubtful; certain it is, they kindly relieved us from all concern as to our whereabouts, and the disposition of our time, regulating these things exactly as they thought proper. Then, although

we were invariably consulted in the most unreserved manner as to their domestic and foreign policy, they took just as much of the advice we gave as proved palatable to them, and no more. In return, moreover, for all the pomp and circumstance with which they had surrounded us, they naturally expected that we should duly play our part in the pageant, by an appropriate display of regal munificence. By some of the most impatient, who conceived we had been rather backward in this respect, pretty strong hints were given on the subject. Of what use, it was asked, was a government, unless to make presents? But before we ridicule this ingenious statement of their views, we should reflect whether the same do not also prevail in more civilized states, with this slight difference, however, that while one portion of the community build expectations on the bounty of the government, the remainder are expected to contribute the means for its exercise. But the Circassians, having never yet enforced the distinction existing between the classes of contributors and receivers, were all naturally desirous, on its adoption, of being included in the latter.

It is also, perhaps, to facilitate a consummation so desirable, that, in seeking to place themselves under the authority of a chief, they prefer one

whose resources shall be, equally with himself, of foreign derivation. It should not be forgotten, at the same time, that such crude notions of government are natural to a gallant and independent race of warriors, who have hitherto bowed to no earthly authority, and among whom it may be justly considered that a great step has been made for its establishment, in the feeling that prevails of its necessity,—proved as that necessity has been beyond a doubt by their voluntarily placing at their head any Englishman who makes his appearance on their coast.

One of the questions that had been submitted to Mr. Bell, related to an Armenian merchant, who, having a large stock of merchandize at Anapa, had petitioned for permission to withdraw it for sale to the mountains. The Russians, with a view to conciliate the natives, and to corrupt them under the pretext of commercial intercourse, allowed them free entrance and egress there. But the Circassians, strongly recommended thereto by Mr. Urquhart, had themselves put a stop to these communications, and, in order to prevent its recurrence, placed a cordon of sentinels in the neighbourhood of the fortress. The plea under which the Armenian now claimed a relaxation in these regulations was, that he had purchased this

stock previous to their establishment, and would suffer great loss if not permitted to dispose of it in the country.

Another question on which Mr. Bell had been consulted was, the pacification of a hostile tribe, that of the Abbats, which, in consequence of a domestic feud in Shapsook, had taken refuge in an island formed by the stream of the Kuban, and repaid the Russians the protection afforded them there by acting as guides to them whenever they made an inroad. They had, however, expressed a desire of being reconciled to their countrymen; —the hearts of the exiles were yearning for their native woods and streams, and the days that remembrance painted as so pleasant among them, for which Russia could offer no adequate recompence, and for which, provided their lot were cast among them once more, every danger and privation would be cheerfully submitted to.

But these are subjects to which I shall revert at another time. That which occupied the Circassians at this moment was the march of the invaders; and in the uncertainty that yet existed, as to the scope of their intended operations, every district was equally alarmed and on the alert.

In the midst of their difficulties, they had had recourse for advice to Mr. Bell, as to some superior intelligence sent by Providence to succour and

enlighten them. But all the measures he could suggest were necessarily of a nature as vague and general as his knowledge of the country and the circumstances to which they applied.

The chief among them was the summoning to their assistance the inhabitants of the neighbouring provinces, and accordingly Mehemet Hadji Oli Effendi, their chief judge and secretary of state, had drawn up a manifesto, which, not unlike the dignitary who composed it, presented a strange medley of shrewdness, pathos, and buffoonery, and which, among other rhetorical flourishes, told the Abbassaks, to whom it was addressed, that their high mountains would ultimately prove no protection to them; if they allowed the more exposed districts, which acted as their advanced guard, to be ruined in detail, their own position, inexpugnable as it appeared to be, would be seriously compromised;—could the spit be considered out of danger while the roast was on fire?

In this document all true Mussulmans were invoked in the name of Sultan Mahmoud, their lord, (spiritual of course,) and his trusty ally, the Inglis Caral, or King of England, to assist in the warfare against the infidel; and Mr. Bell, albeit no Mussulman himself, yet as a friend to Mussulmans, and an enemy to Ghiaurs, was invited to put his signature to it. But this he declined to do, and

as, a few days afterwards, ambassadors from the Abbassaks arrived to greet us in person, I believe it was never sent. Indeed, it is very doubtful if Mehemet Effendi, a famous diplomatist in his way, meant to send it at all, and if it was ever intended for anything more than a mystification for their English visitors, to whom he conceived himself by no means called upon to tell the truth, but bound in duty, as a true Circassian, to impose the belief of his countrymen being much more united than they really were. As to reinforcements in any number from the Abbassaks, he must have been pretty sure that, though summoned, they would, "like spirits from the vasty deep," be very slow in making their appearance; or if they did come, still surer that their presence would be far from desirable or welcome. Under existing circumstances, an army of their own countrymen, gathered from the remoter provinces, would probably give them more trouble than the Russians themselves. For the latter they had only to provide as much powder and lead as the neighbourhood could afford for their entertainment: but, save us from our friends, as we say in England; for, from these they could neither withhold their sheep nor their pasta; and in the absence of public funds, or resources of any sort, the collec-

tion of a considerable force in a particular spot would certainly produce a famine there.

From the nature of the country, if the advantages it afforded for defence against the enemy were duly attended to, a handful of men would be as efficient as a host; and the whole male and adult population being armed, were prepared for the Russians wherever they might present themselves.

In crossing the Kuban for a foray into the Russian territory, the same reasons not existing against it, they would frequently assemble there in great force, though even then I have heard it maintained by them, that small bodies of cavalry are preferable to large ones, as being more manageable, and better adapted for the purposes of secrecy and expedition.

The above matters were summarily discussed by Mr. Bell and myself, during the endless removes of another repast, which, with what appetite I could command after the feasting I had already undergone scarce an hour before, I was, out of courtesy to my new Konag Bey, compelled to sit down to, and which, notwithstanding the eagerness of the multitude out of doors for our interview, their notions of hospitality made a necessary preliminary to it.

CHAPTER VI.

Our conference with the council—Remarks on that assembly—
Selim Bey — Schimaf's rapacity — Mehemet Hadji Oli
Effendi—His motives for patronising us.

ON issuing, at length, into the grass-grown court in front of the guest-house, we found it occupied by a dense crowd of people, through which room was made for us as we passed to an open space, where mats and cushions had been prepared for us in the centre. On our arrival there, the most distinguished persons seated themselves round us in a ring, an arrangement apparently inseparable from the proceedings of a deliberative assembly. From the number of turbaned heads among them, it might be seen there was a general muster of

the effendis or judges of the land there on the occasion.

Wherever we cast our eyes beyond this circle, they encountered those of the assembled warriors, who not only pressed on every side of us, but were many of them clinging to the trees that enclosed the court-yard, from whose foliage above, as well as from the esplanade beneath, a throng of grim-looking countenances were bent on us in every direction. Wonder, curiosity, and suspicion might be traced there in fluctuating yet legible characters; but though in some aspect more savage than the rest might be detected a scowl of hostility, the prevailing expression was such as to convince us we were among friends, and had nothing to fear from the few that were ill-disposed to us. Mingled at the same time with the respect they bore us as Englishmen was the proud consciousness of their own independence, and the feeling that if strangers were admitted into retreats deemed hitherto inaccessible, if allowed a seat in the councils of Circassia, the former they had themselves introduced them to, nor were the secrets of the latter such as a free and warlike nation had any reason to be ashamed of.

The chief interlocutor on the occasion, an office ceded to him by the tacit consent of the whole

assembly, was Haoud Oglu Mansour Bey. He was seated on the grass opposite to us, and though he spoke Turkish fluently, yet, in order that all might understand our conversation, addressed us in Circassian. We had consequently to make use of two interpreters, our Georgian and Mehemet Hadji Oli, the judge. But though condescending to officiate in this capacity, the latter was far too great an original himself to confine his genius to simple translation, but, as was evident from the complacent leer with which he delivered them, would interlard it as he went on with sundry inventions and embellishments of his own. He was one of those voluble, impudent, and facetious orators who are such favourites in popular assemblies; and as he stood before us, leaning on his staff, forcibly reminded me of the chaplain of the outlaws in the haunts of merry Sherwood.

The conference was opened by Mansour Bey. He welcomed us on the part of his assembled countrymen to Circassia, inquired after the health of Daoud Bey (Mr. Urquhart), and concluded by asking what hopes we could give them of the interference in their behalf of England against the Muscovite, who, as we could see, had again invaded their provinces, and seemed bent on destroying them if they could. In reply, I explained to them the progress that had been made in the Vixen

affair, which, from the tone adopted by the English government, there was every reason to believe would lead to the raising of the blockade, and the recognition of their independence by England. On this subject, however, we could only offer our opinion as individuals, being wholly unconnected with the government, and having come to Circassia solely from motives of private interest and curiosity.

My answer, I could perceive, was not considered satisfactory. The dangers by which they were surrounded were imminent, and the prospect of relief vague and remote; I was therefore urged to express myself more explicitly, as they conceived it was in my power to do so if I chose. "Our hopes," continued Mansour, "since the visit of Daoud Bey, have been centered in England. Three years have elapsed, three long years of burnings, devastations, and bloodshed, since these hopes, kindled in our hearts by his presence, have been their main support in all our calamities. It is true that, unlike Katchuk Bey, who came afterwards, he made us no promises, but he cheered us with his exhortations, and on departing took with him a document signed by the loyal chiefs of Circassia, wherein our wrongs, our sufferings, and our hopes were clearly set forth and embodied; this he engaged to take to the King of England, and

present for us at the foot of his throne. Knowing as we did the power, greatness, and magnanimity of your sovereign, knowing what in similar circumstances had been done for our brethren, the Mamelukes of Egypt, could we doubt of the result, or think that the arm that was stretched out for their deliverance had become too short or too feeble for our own? No! a messenger from Heaven could not have been welcomed more joyfully than Daoud Bey, or have left behind him hearts more encouraged for the present, or more confident for the future.

“That confidence, notwithstanding all we have since endured, remains undiminished, fair, ample, and serene, as the moon at full. There is not a man in this assembly, I will add, in Circassia, who would not make any sacrifice to prove his gratitude for the assistance which, through his efforts, we are still sure we shall receive. Our horses, our arms, our slaves, ourselves and families, are his, to dispose of as he pleases. The Padishah himself is not more venerated here, and our very children have learnt to lisp his name in their prayers. Speak, then, and in the same spirit of sincerity declare to us what we have really to expect; indicate a day, no matter how distant, that will bring with it some prospect of repose, when we shall be permitted to tend our flocks and sow our fields in

security—when our houses shall be safe from fire, and our children from massacre.

“ But for the love of God do not deceive us, do not repay with guile our confidence ; let us have the simple truth ; falsehood, we know, may be made to resemble it—nay, so near may it approach the truth, that there shall not be the breadth of my two fingers (said he, suiting the action to the word) between them ; yet shall they be as distinct from one another as light from darkness.”

Adjured in this solemn manner to speak positively to things about which I knew nothing certain, I could only reiterate the hopes which I had conceived respecting them, and explain to them as well as I could the ground on which they were built.

I had deemed it important that, at a moment when Russia was straining every nerve for their subjugation, and when without such encouragement their hearts might have failed them, that they also should participate in those hopes. It was with that view that I had come amongst them, and, concurrently with Mr. Bell, I now pledged myself to remain till time, which I trusted would be short, should prove whether or no they had been well founded. That they might in some measure judge how far my statements were deserving of credit, I volunteered to accompany

them to battle, and though but a raw warrior, promised to shrink from no danger that might put my zeal in their cause to the test. That cause was the sacred one of liberty, as dear to Englishmen as to themselves, and for which, if necessary, they were as willing to lay down their lives. It was true, they would this time have to fight their battles alone, but it was to be hoped that the nations who had a common interest in arresting the progress of their oppressors would not let them long remain so. In the meanwhile, let them face the storm that now raged around them with resolution, and in the animating hope that it might be the last.

But that which was most calculated to re-assure them was, a message of rather mysterious import, which Mr. Bell was charged with to them from Lord Ponsonby. His Lordship had desired him to inform the Circassians that they would shortly receive a communication from him, which he doubted not would prove highly satisfactory to them. He had told Mr. Bell at the same time that he regretted he had not heard of his intended voyage sooner, as in that case he might himself have been the bearer of this communication.

The dispatches from their ambassador, Sefer Bey, brought by Nogai Ismael, had not yet been opened, but, when subsequently referred to, left no doubt as to what had been alluded to in this

message ; the which, moreover, came in confirmation of its authenticity.

Mansour now briefly conferred with his countrymen, and, judging from their smiling looks, and the frequent repetition of the word *ariva*, expressive of approbation, the impression so far produced on them seemed decidedly favourable. He then resumed his discourse. "It is not our custom," he said, "to expose the lives of our guests, particularly when so valuable to us as yours, in fighting our battles ; we are ourselves bound to defend them against every molestation. Be under no alarm on our account ; we have warred with the Muscovite ten years at least, and if England in the end befriend us, will war ten years longer. We have lost, indeed, many of our bravest warriors, but, as you may see," he continued, casting a glance round the assembly, where many a scarred and perforated visage bore witness to his words, "we have men and lads to replace them yet. The worst of it is, our rifles are become nearly useless to us for want of powder and lead ; yet, while we have swords to wield against them, will we never surrender to the Ghiaours. If deserted by the whole world, if driven to the last extremity, it will then be seen what the Adijhens are capable of. We will slaughter with our own hands our wives and our children, that they may not fall into those of the

infidel ; we will then perish to a man in avenging them."

Deeply moved at the emotion evinced by this brave and patriotic chieftain, I could not resist the impulse which led me to make them an immediate offer of the two or three tons of lead I had brought as merchandize, and the expense of which Mr. Bell proposed to divide with me. The announcement of the donation produced a momentary murmur of applause, and it was accepted as a matter of course. Hadji Oli returned thanks for the rest in a manner that appeared to me rather singular. "They were greatly obliged," he said, "by this seasonable gift of lead ; some barrels of gunpowder, by way of accompaniment, would have made it much more so ; yet were they very grateful for what they had received."

The council ring was hereupon broken up, and, as we retired to our apartments, our hands were grasped with a great show of cordiality by the chiefs and venerable tamatas. This friendly mode of greeting is the same here as in England, except that they merely clasp, and do not shake hands with each other. The multitude now flocked to the neighbouring grove, where the dispatches brought by Nogai Ismael were to be publicly read, for, however inconvenient the practice may appear, they allow of no secrets in the administration of

their affairs; nobody has any right to be wiser in regard to them than his neighbours.

From the scene I have just described, some idea may be formed of the nature of these assemblies, in which, I should add, that the greatest order and decorum prevail. Tumult or violence are steadily discountenanced, and the phrase they employ for eloquence, *tatlu dil*—literally, “sweet tongue”—marks their preference for the persuasive to the wrangling style. Everybody, as I have said, has the right, if he chooses, of addressing the assembly, but it is a privilege which few avail themselves of. The young men are remarkable for a modest demeanour towards their elders; for personal experience must, in countries like these, have much greater weight than where the facilities for reading and study supply its deficiencies.

It rarely happens that any under the age of forty ever interfere in these debates; and only with a tolerable sprinkling of grey hairs in the beard, announcing the matured wisdom of the *tamatas*, or elders, can the orator command attention. Should there be any individual fonder than others of hearing himself talk, they have a way of silencing him peculiar to themselves; they neither crow like cocks, nor bray like certain other animals in more civilized assemblies, but adopt a method for which the form and the roomy nature of their

house of meeting, *al fresco*, are most peculiarly adapted. The unfortunate orator in such cases is apt to find himself with no other audience than the neighbouring trees and bushes, the circle he had been addressing having rapidly dissolved and re-adjusted itself out of earshot, where it might be seen listening to somebody with better claims on its attention. Except in cases like these, the patience, temper, and moderation of these assemblies are most exemplary; and on occasions when they have been sitting on some matter of local interest, I have, on returning in an evening from an excursion, found the council-ring unbroken, on the same spot, and canopied by the same tree, as when I had left it in the morning. Day after day will they resume their deliberations, while persons, whose opinions they respect, will speak for hours together; but what, no doubt, tends to prolong their sittings is, the necessity of their being unanimous—a majority on a question will not suffice to decide it; unless all are agreed, they separate without coming to any decision at all, since none will be swayed by opinions he disapproves of.

Among the individuals I found in attendance on Mr. Bell were two princes of the first rank, called Pshee, a degree superior to that of the Ouzdens. In former days, princes of this rank possessed considerable privileges; they had vassals whose

services they could command in time of war, and who contributed to uphold their dignity when at peace.

But in the three provinces of Natukoitch, Shapsook, and the Abbassaks, as I have already intimated, there had been for some years past a tendency, introduced, I believe, by Mahomedanism, to level all such distinctions; and the only rights, as far as I could discover, to which persons of this class could lay claim at present are, precedence in fighting or feasting, being equally allowed the foremost place at table or in the battle-field. To these prerogatives they add another, equally distinguished, that of sitting down first, and graciously permitting others to be seated after them. There were then three individuals of this class—the first, Sefer Bey, to whom I have frequently alluded as acting for them in capacity of ambassador in Turkey; the second, Schimaf Bey, Prince of Semez, of whom I shall have occasion to speak hereafter; and the third, Selim Bey, Prince of Wana, whom now I beg to introduce to my readers. Like the other, Prince Schimaf, he possessed little influence in council or the field, and with him had been set, by way of utilizing his dignity, to do us the honours as *Musafirs* of the country. Selim Bey had formerly occupied a considerable post in the seraglio at Constantinople,

and had commanded a regiment in the imperial guard.

But on the death of his brother, the brave Pschukoi, who fell in battle, having come over to Circassia to arrange the affairs of his family, which were in disorder, he had remained in the country, thinking it disgraceful to live in ease and opulence at Constantinople while his own country was struggling for its very existence with the Muscovite. He had seen more of the world than the generality of his countrymen; there was less stiffness in his manners, and his conversation was lively and amusing. He was, as he himself told us, of European descent, and the blood in his veins (like everything else that was ancient here) was Genny-vis, an assertion which his fine features, of the true Italian cast, appeared fully to justify. Whether from his partiality to us on that account, or whether, as a *bon vivant*, he felt indignant that those with whom he was in the general habits of social intercourse should be judged capable of "treason, stratagem, and spoils," he now came to inform us that Nogai Ismael was then endeavouring to poison the minds of his countrymen in our regard by the defamatory report I have alluded to. We were of course a good deal excited by this intelligence, and by no means disposed to await the result with resignation. We therefore sallied

forth, accompanied by our interpreter, and sent a messenger to the council requesting that we might be confronted with our accuser, and heard in our own vindication. We could see in the meantime that there was an unusual degree of commotion in the circle, which Hadji Oli immediately left, and coming to us, entreated us to withdraw to our apartment. He assured us that we had nothing whatever to apprehend; that Nogai Ismael had been retailing to them some idle calumnies against Daoud Bey and ourselves, but that the dispatches of Sefer Bey, so far from corroborating these stories, recommended them strongly to treat us with kindness and hospitality.

But the fact was, the passion of the people, inclined both from their character and circumstances to suspicion, had been inflamed to the highest pitch. Many of them exclaimed that they were abused and betrayed as they had formerly been by Tausch and Marigny; nor were there wanting some, and at the head of these Schimaf Bey, a prince of the first rank, but greedy and mean-spirited in the extreme, to avail themselves of this disposition to have us immediately plundered of our property. But this hopeful plan, projected in the worst spirit of Caucasian misrule, found little favour even with those who had their doubts of us. But though baulked for the present in his expecta-

tions of a scramble, he had still an eye to our treasure trunks, no more relinquishing his designs on them than the shark in attendance on a ship at sea. With the same hungry stare, and with just as little to say for himself, was Schimaf at our elbow wherever we went; and we, mistaking his assiduity for personal attention to ourselves, and ignorant of the perfidious part he had played in the Medjilis, long treated him with a consideration he little deserved at our hands.

It was in this emergency that we were in a great measure rescued by the friendly interference in our behalf of Hadji Oli Effendi. He declared to the assembly that we were specially recommended to them by Sefer Bey; a statement which, although he had also made it to ourselves, was not exactly true; for though their ambassador had enjoined them, in a general way, to receive with hospitality all Englishmen, whether merchants or travellers, who should come to their coast, no specific mention had been made in his letters of either Mr. Bell or myself. But the judge was not a man to stick at trifles, and having determined to take us under his protection, he did not hesitate to make up for this omission himself.

But that the reader may better appreciate his motives on this occasion, as well as his subsequent

behaviour to us, I will endeavour to convey to him some idea of a character so remarkable, premising that if Russia can boast of a Nesselrode, and England of a Palmerston, Circassia has also her Hadji Oli, as accomplished a master of humbug as either of them. His countrymen were justly proud of him ; for though of his prowess as a warrior they may have had their doubts,—the only sign he could shew of it being a wound in the hind quarters of his horse, which was a rather ambiguous one,—yet of his talents at mystification and rhodomontade there could be no question whatever ; and as a proof of their confidence in him they gave him the whole direction of their foreign policy, with a *carte blanche* to make use of these qualities to the best of his ability for the good of his country, forgetting, apparently, how far, with the same laudable intentions, he might think it his duty to make fools of them also. Therefore while, on the one hand, he wrote the most magnificent dispatches, setting forth the rapid progress made by different provinces in the establishment of order and union under the national flag, and the necessity of England's availing herself of this unanimity and promising state of affairs by sending them an immediate supply of gunpowder, cannon, and engineers to keep up the spirits of

his countrymen, on the other, he announced that all these *desiderata*, if not already on the way, might be expected in a month or so.

But, however angry at being so repeatedly choused by him, they had not on that account a meaner opinion of his sagacity, and, notwithstanding their disappointments, he continued to be regarded on all questions relating to their foreign and domestic economy as little less than an oracle. Did any difficulties arise as to the latter, he settled them at once by producing, from a bag usually attached to his saddle bow, some musty-looking volumes bound in vellum, from which he would very gravely read certain passages in Arabic; and as to his knowledge of Europe, and the policy of its "seven kingdoms," had he not been in Egypt, the *Ultima Thule* of Circassian pilgrimage? and could he fail to be conversant with such matters in their minutest particulars? Even we, who should have known something about them, were utterly confounded at the extent of his information, nor could we venture to contend with so great an authority. As regards externals, I have already likened the judge to the jovial clerk of Copmanhurst. I might, perhaps, add some further points of resemblance.

Like him, he occupied a hermitage in a secluded glen, where, like him—but I will not divulge the

secrets of that holy retreat; let it suffice, that there was a delicious fall of dew in the neighbourhood, more potent, even judging from the brilliancy of his dispatches, than the distillation of Castaly itself. Still, with all his failings, his burley and overbearing demeanour and inordinate ambition, Mehemet Effendi was a true lover of his country, and though naturally a kind-hearted man, the terror and scourge of all mercenary traitors who would have sold their own and others' birthright to the Russians. His interference on our behalf in the Medjilis was occasioned partly by his belief that we really were what we represented ourselves to be, and partly with a view of bolstering his own authority; bringing us forward in support of his reforming policy with much the same effect as his Arabic, powerful and imposing because utterly beyond their comprehension. Mysterious hints were given of our being secret agents of Sultan Mahmoud; and the mixture of awe, suspicion, kindness, and cupidity by which we were henceforth regarded by the multitude, unconscious at the time of their motives for it, was equally perplexing and amusing to us. Among the principal chiefs of the tribe of Chipakou who, however favourably disposed they may have been, had still their misgivings with respect to us,—for we had brought no credentials from Mr. Urquhart, that

gentleman having refused, lest he should compromise himself in his official capacity, to provide us with them,—it was determined that if we could do them no good, we should, on the other hand, work them as little mischief as possible ; measures were therefore taken for keeping us under close surveillance, and for Konag Bey was allotted to us an old chieftain of the dominant tribe, as experienced yet as amiable an Argus as could be found, of the name of Keri Oglu Shamiz Bey.

CHAPTER VII.

Lord Ponsonby's communications to the Circassians—Negotiations with the Russian general—Portfolio General—Feud—Deputation from Abbassehk.

WE were in the evening visited in our apartment by the judge. He came to us in high spirits; the dispatches they had received from Sefer Bey had filled him with exultation; an effect which, when he explained their purport, they equally produced on us.

"Henceforward," he exclaimed, "we are subjects of the King of England as much as you can be; we are under his protection; he is our konag—we his slaves; we will obey him implicitly, let him command what he will; unless," added he,

laughing, and looking at our pantaloons, "it be to wear such unreasonable *shalvas*."*

He then proceeded to inform us that a communication had been made to Sefer Bey, through Mr. Kerr, the British Consul at Adrianople, on the part of the Ambassador at Constantinople, by whom he had been instructed to write to them as follows:—

They were to send a flag of truce to the Russian general, demanding an immediate cessation of hostilities, and proposing terms of peace for the future. They were to engage, on their part, to abstain from all violation of the Russian territory, and to respect from that time the international boundary of the Kuban; while the Russians, on their side, were to retire beyond that river, and evacuate the fortresses they had raised in Circassia. For the observance of these conditions, as regarded themselves, they were empowered to offer the guarantee of England. These propositions were to be made three times; and in event of their being rejected by the general, the result was to be forthwith transmitted to the Ambassador at Con-

* Our pantaloons, differing from those of the Circassians in the close fit above the knee, were considered to shew very bad taste. They said we might excel in all other arts—we could manufacture arms, build ships, &c., but we could not construct a pair of breeches.

stantinople. Such was the tenour of Sefer Bey's dispatches, to which, I repeat, we could not but attach the highest importance, and congratulate ourselves on being permitted, so providentially, to witness the opening of relations between England and Circassia—a measure, we conceived, fraught not only with the deepest consequences to the tribes of the Caucasus, but affecting the destinies of the whole East, and the welfare of mankind at large.

Of the authenticity of this communication there could not be the slightest doubt; for we had not only the internal evidence of the dispatches themselves, wherein persons and things were alluded to that the Circassians could have had no previous conception of, but also the collateral proof afforded by the message which Mr. Bell, without knowing its drift, had been the bearer from Lord Ponsonby. Our position, therefore, at this moment was a proud one, for we felt, with no less certainty than the Circassians themselves, that England was now clearly committed in their affairs, and had proceeded too far to retreat without a total loss of the character she had so long enjoyed among the nations, and which, whoever might be her rulers, we felt convinced, and would have pledged our existence to it, she would still

duly maintain. But it seems we reckoned without our host; and while deeming ourselves beholden to fortune in thus presenting us as Englishmen to receive the acknowledgments due from a grateful people to our country, we little deemed of the humiliation in store for us when it should be found that these acknowledgments were uncalled-for, and that confidence had been misplaced.

The heralds who were to convey the propositions of the Circassians to the Russian general came, previous to their departure, to inquire if we had anything to add to them. As in the time when Argantes presented himself in the camp of Godfrey of Boulogne, "*In guisa d'uom grande e non curante*," the Circassians to this day seek to make an imposing figure, and wisely consult effect in their embassies. Scarcely a year before they had received from Sefer Bey a copy of the Portfolio, containing, as he informed them, proofs which the Russians themselves could not controvert, that they had no lawful claim to Circassia, and which our friend the judge, improving on this hint, informed them they had only to present to the Governor of Anapa to make him evacuate that fortress forthwith. The pamphlet in question was handed about to the chiefs in council, who, after turning it over for some time, and being able to make nothing of it, at length decided that if the

cabalistic characters it contained really did possess the virtue attributed to them, the experiment, at any rate, was worth trying.

They accordingly determined on a deputation, which was arranged with due regard to the solemnity of their errand. On this head, however, there were some difficulties; for though it being stated in Sefer Bey's communication that Portfolio declared so and so, made such and such statements, &c., they naturally concluded that Portfolio was some illustrious individual of Frankistan; yet to which of the "*seven kingdoms*" of which it was composed he belonged, nobody, no, not even the judge himself, could inform them. It was therefore resolved that, to obviate any mistake on the matter, each kingdom should have a representative, and that seven of their most distinguished chiefs should be the bearers of this mandate of Portfolio General (for to that rank they had promoted him) to the Military Governor of Anapa.

The astonishment of that functionary on the arrival of this deputation, clad in all their finery, each in his casque and shirt of mail, girt with his bow and quiver, and attended by his squire, may easily be conceived by the reader; nor could it have been anyway diminished when, after delivering to him a document with a blue cover inscribed with gilt characters, (the General's well-known

uniform of blue, with gold facings,) they demanded by what time, conformably with the notice given him in that paper by Portfolio General, he intended to march his garrison out of the fortress, and give it up to its legitimate masters. Little prepared for a summons so peremptory, the Governor required a week to consider about it, at the end of which time, as he shewed no disposition to budge, the deputation waited upon him once more. What passed between them on this occasion they did not say, further than it was evident he was laughing at them in his beard, and declared that if Portfolio General wished to turn him out of his castle, he had better undertake the business himself.

The Circassians could not help feeling that they had made but an indifferent figure in this affair ; and it was, perhaps, that they might not again expose themselves to ridicule, or in order to exhibit to General Willemineff their indifference for him and his army, that, instead of sending chiefs or elders on this occasion, they selected three of the Dely Canns, on whose prudence they thought they could depend, cautioning them at the same time to beware of the wine cup, which experience had shewn to be a certain key in the hands of the Sari General to their most secret counsels. Sari, or Curmisi, was the familiar addi-

tion or *soubriquet* bestowed by them on General Willemineff, signifying red or sandy, and derived from the colour of his hair, in the same manner as they distinguished by personal allusions their own worthies—one being designated as the *topal*, or lame; another, the *cambour*, or hunchback, &c.

At one time, the general was scarcely better known to his own troops than the Circassians, who, agreeably to their notions of warfare, admitting, as in the Homeric ages, an interchange of courtesies as well as of blows, never objected to a conference. But though they had by far too good an opinion of their own intelligence to think they could be outwitted by the Russian general, and affirmed that, however cunning they might be, they had in the Abassa “*daha shaitan*,” devils to deal with much deeper than themselves; yet, owing perhaps to the odds which the former derived from their wealth, the result had proved that, whatever individuals might gain by them, the people at large were anything but benefited by these interviews. The tamatas had in consequence wisely put a stop to them, and interdicted all intercourse with the enemy, save such as was especially sanctioned by the council. The chief of the heralds on this occasion was a handsome young merchant, from whom Mr. Bell had experienced much civility and attention. To his mercantile pursuits

were, of course, superadded those of a warrior. Arms in this country can scarcely be considered a profession apart, but the occupation rather of every freeman, followed or neglected at pleasure. After pressing our hands in pledge of fidelity to us, the whole of them set out to the head quarters of the Russian general, expecting to find him at Ghelendjek.

The two days that intervened before their return, were spent in deliberations on their domestic affairs; the council ring might be seen calmly engaged in discussion on the one side, while the Dely Canns were eagerly pursuing their sports on the other. The principal of these is the race, or, rather, the chase, one horseman being followed at full speed by several others, whom he seeks to elude, not only by the swiftness of his horse, but by his address in dodging, winding, and availing himself of the inequalities of the ground. To prove their skill as marksmen, they practised the long shot with a rest, and fire, with their horses at full gallop, hitting, *en passant*, a *calpac* on the ground, having also, within a few yards distance, to withdraw their rifles from the felt covering, in which they are slung at their backs: the same feat is performed with a pistol. Archery, though not so much in vogue as rifle shooting, has its amateurs. Their target is attached to a pole at the

height of about fifty yards, at which they also shoot from their saddles, twisting their bodies completely round to take aim as they pass. To these exercises they add wrestling, and pitching with huge stones. Such are the gymnasia of the Caucasus, where emulation supplies the place of instructors, where excellence is aimed at only for the admiration and respect it ensures, and where the sole punishment of inferiority is contempt.

I have already intimated that the question which at this time engrossed the attention of the tamatas was the restoration to their country of the fugitive tribe of the Abbats. The difficulties with which it was beset were considerable, owing to the conduct which since their exile they had pursued towards their countrymen, having not only ravaged their territory and plundered their cattle themselves, but acted as guides to the Russians in their most successful incursions. There were, besides, considerations of a personal nature ; one of the leading men of Shapsook, who had been mainly instrumental in effecting their ruin, and in the prosecution of his views guilty of deeds which neither he could palliate nor they forgive, was in the number of the judges now called upon to decide their fate. His name was Khoros Oglu Ameerz, of the tribe of Rubleh.

There was about this man a restless and anxious

book, productive, in spite of noble features and a fascinating address, of a decidedly disagreeable impression, and which, when we had heard the history I am about to relate, it was natural to conclude was the result of a stricken conscience. Crimes yet "unwhipped of justice" had sunk him in his own esteem, and, notwithstanding the ascendancy his talents still gave him over them, in that of his countrymen.

About five years ago the Circassians, with the view of obtaining warlike assistance from the Porte, had dispatched an embassy, composed of three individuals, to Constantinople. One of these was a noble, named Hatukoi, of the tribe of Chipakou, from the province of Natukvitch; the second, of the equally powerful tribe of the Abbats, from Shapsouk, a chief, of the name of Besin; the third, as the commoners, or Tocavs, insisted on having a representative from their own body, was Ameertz. The two latter had, previously to their mission, been on the closest terms of intimacy, nor had Ameertz shewed any disposition to withhold from the noble the customary marks of respect; but at Constantinople he found, that besides giving his colleague a superiority he could ill brook in the minds of the Turkish ministers, they rendered him, when presents were to be made, the chosen object of their munificence. Distinctions of rank, when

transferred to a foreign sphere, are viewed in a light and involve results which were never originally contemplated; and Besin, from a sense of justice or friendship, might in some measure have waived them under these circumstances. As it was, his pretension cost him dear; they long continued to rankle in the heart of the stung plebeian, nor after they had left the gilded palaces of Stamboul for their rustic homes on the Caucasus were they forgiven.

The disposition of the people in both these provinces was at that time highly propitious for the execution of his views, they being, no less than himself, bent on abridging the authority of the nobles, who, having neither vassals nor wealth to support it, were soon compelled to surrender the only privilege that, independent of empty forms, remained to them.

Manslaughter is here expiated by fines, and the life of an ouzden had been estimated at a higher price than that of a commoner; the fine was now equalized, and two hundred oxen awarded for noble or ignoble blood. The Koran, it was said, admitted of no hereditary distinctions between man and man, nor should a people calling themselves Mussulmans continue to observe them. The foremost and most active of those reformers was, as will readily be supposed, Ameerz; the others

were lukewarm in comparison. He would have divested the nobles not only of substantial privileges, but also of those for which even his own class still cherished a respect—the trappings of observance, consecrated by custom. He had not yet trampled upon his enemy; and his baffled vengeance crouched once more, tiger-like, for a deadlier spring. The opportunity was, unhappily, too soon afforded him by the treasonable conduct of Besin's brother.

It was about this time that the Russians, having projected a military road from the Kuban to Ghelendjek, were desirous of obtaining a survey of the mountain-pass through which it would have to be carried. For this purpose they had recourse to Tausch, their German agent, who, since his expulsion from Pchat, which I have before alluded to, had maintained a secret correspondence with some of the chiefs, and who now, in concert with the brother of Besin, undertook to conduct a Russian officer of engineers, disguised as a Circassian, through that part of the country which they wished to have explored. They were accordingly taken during the night to the house of the Abbat, and under his guidance pursued their route the night following to Ghelendjek; but the proceedings of the conspirators had not escaped observation. There had been a vigilant eye upon

them all, and long ere they had reached the sheltering walls of their fortress, the country had been roused, and every avenue in the mountains beset. The fugitives were nevertheless in safety: they had partaken of bread and salt under the roof of a Circassian, and he and his tribe had become responsible for it with their lives: whatever their horror of a spy and a Russian, his person was sacred in the character of their guest. The pursuit proved a fruitless one; but there was other game which Ameerz would not have relinquished for a thousand Russians, and he hastened with a force of hostile rifles to invest the house of Besin, where the wretched brother of the chieftain had taken refuge.

Besin had summoned his tribe, and when the Tocavs, with Ameerz at their head, made their appearance in his glen, they found the Abbats already assembled and prepared to vindicate the rights which custom and the law of the mountains had in these cases prescribed. They demanded for their clansman a trial before the judges of the land, and in the event of his being found guilty, the privilege of punishing him themselves. But the Tocavs, justly and violently incensed, were deaf to their remonstrances. Ameerz, their spokesman on the occasion, sternly replied, "If you find the wolf in your fold, do you talk of trial? Your

kinsman has brought Russians into the country ; if you yourselves be not accessory to his guilt, deliver the traitor into our hands, and let justice take its course ; the land of his birth cast him forth from her bosom to the sea, which must be his grave."

This sentence was confirmed by acclamation, a thousand voices crying, "*Amin ! amin !*"—(To the sea with him ! to the sea !) But the Abbats, and Besin in particular, had been accustomed to exercise great influence in these councils, and it still sufficed to protract the discussions till the evening, when, agreeably to custom, they were adjourned, under the personal pledge of Besin for the safe custody of his brother till the morning. That pledge was broken, and his brother, permitted to escape, had already swam the Kuban on the fleetest steed from his stables, when Besin presented himself next morning to the assembly in his stead.

Their wrath was now inflamed to the highest pitch, and the remains of respect with which they had hitherto treated him gave way to unmitigated harshness and contumely. He was accused of being an accomplice in his brother's treachery, and ordered to be imprisoned in his own house till a national assembly should be convened for the purpose of trying him. To Ameerz, in the mean-

while, was assigned the custody of the prisoner, a task he undertook with great alacrity ; and when the multitude had retired, taking with them the rest of the Abbats, it must have been with the darkest forebodings that the captive ouzden saw himself and family left in his solitary and secluded valley, in charge of his mortal enemy and a few associates chosen by himself from his own tribe.

Many days had not elapsed before it was rumoured that Besin had been treated with great cruelty, and that violence had been offered to his wife ; shrieks piercing and protracted had alarmed the neighbourhood, and announced the perpetration of some fearful atrocity ; and the Tocavs, who, having had time to cool, began to think they had gone too far, and acted indiscreetly in placing the Abbat chieftain in the power of his enemy, assembled once more, and returned to the scene of their former deliberations. The Abbat was found heavily ironed, and his wife confined in a separate apartment ; appearances were black against him, but there was no positive evidence of guilt on the part of Ameerz. He and his companions said nothing, of course, that could criminate themselves ; the proud ouzden preserved a gloomy silence, and the woman only wrung her hands and wept bitterly. Neither the one nor the other would publish their own dishonour, or, if it had been

committed, divulge an outrage not only revolting to humanity, but, in the eyes of a Circassian, involving something still more disgraceful—a violation of caste. An ouzden cannot even intermarry with a Tocav; his race would be contaminated. Adultery, in such cases, he may punish with death; but he is silent as to the cause, and never claims the fine which the law entitles him to. But the crime, now more than suspected to have been committed, was one hitherto unheard of in the country; one which the Tocavs themselves, notwithstanding their political jealousies and disputes, shuddered to contemplate.

Besin was immediately set at liberty, and the use he made of it was, to retire with the partner of his wrongs to Natukvitch; he thence repaired to an island in the centre of the Kuban, and having placed himself under the protection of Russia, was there joined by the whole tribe of the Abbats, voluntary exiles and sworn avengers of their chief.

If Besin had declined to make known his grievances by words, they were unequivocally and fearfully declared by his deeds; the sweeping and sanguinary retribution with which, by his agency, the whole body of Tocavs, as abettors of Ameerz, were subsequently visited, left no doubt as to the deadly injury that had prompted it. Ameerz him-

self was of course the object of their marked attentions; he had more than once been surprised by a midnight attack, had narrowly escaped with his life, and was still a cripple from his wounds; his house had been burnt, and from one of the richest men in Shapsook he had become the most needy. All his cattle and his slaves had been successively lifted and carried off. But that which had been most exceptionable in their proceedings, and which their countrymen now found it difficult to overlook, was the assistance they had rendered to the Russians by acting as guides to them in their inroads, and more particularly in the campaign that had terminated in the erection of the fortress of Aboon. They had for some time, however, betrayed a more conciliatory spirit, and had at length petitioned to be admitted once more into the country, engaging to renounce all views of hostility in future. The chief obstacle to this arrangement was the feud existing between Besin and Ameerz; in consequence, it was for some time rejected; but before I left the country, Besin having died, it was finally acceded to.

It was about this time we gave an audience to a deputation from the great province of Abbassak, which occupies the whole of the central or mountainous part of the country between Shapsook and Mount Elborouz. Deputation I have called it,

though that is hardly a proper designation for a body of individuals who, though virtually representing, as I have before explained, the part of the country from which they came, had not been formally delegated. The respect with which they were treated by the council was not unmixed with ostentation. The latter evidently wished to make lions of their two Englishmen, and to exhibit them to their wondering and envious compatriots as the special *musafirs* of their favoured provinces. To give greater effect to the interview, we were requested to receive them on the open lawn, where we accordingly repaired, and, surrounded by the chiefs and elders of Shapsook and Natukvitch, and throned in royal state on our mats and cushions, we sat waiting for them, as they slowly advanced, five of them abreast, including two cadis, or magistrates, through the opening that had been left for them in front of the circle. The judge, who acted as prompter as well as dragoman on this occasion, had recommended us to speak to them in a severe and lofty strain, and to take them roundly to task for the apathy they had shewn in the good cause; so that, without knowing why, we were prepared to address them much "in the imperious vein of King Cambyzes."

Their costume was precisely the same as that of the rest of the assembly, but of gayer colours

and more costly materials. If beneath them in dignity, they certainly surpassed them in wealth. Their country had been comparatively exempted from the ruinous consequences of the protracted war that had desolated these less fortunate provinces, reducing even many of the nobles to the appearance of paupers. After taking us by the hand, and welcoming us in the usual manner, they inquired after the health of Daoud Bey, and we then entered into a general conversation as to the state and prospects of the country. Agreeably to the cue we had received from the judge, we asked them why the people of the Abbasak did not exert themselves in the common cause against Russia, and why these devoted provinces were left alone to support the whole brunt of the war with her. The time would come when they would bitterly repent of their improvidence, and when they themselves would be visited by the calamities of which, while confined to the territory of their neighbours, they remained indifferent spectators. It was only by affording them timely assistance they could hope to avert the same disasters from themselves. The judge in translating this discourse, amplified upon it as usual, and after repeating our exhortation to them to come generously forward to the succour of their countrymen, he added, "and when you do come, it must not be to

steal our horses as you have been in the habit of doing. We will admit none here but such as will take the oath to live like honest folks and good Mussulmans."

This language was at least frank and explicit, and the latter part I believe much more intelligible than the former; for in what manner, under existing circumstances, an army from the Abbassaks was to be supported here was a problem, as I have before intimated, of rather difficult solution. The utmost that could be expected was, that some of their most distinguished warriors (for individual prowess is here as much esteemed as it was with us in the days of King Arthur) should cheer by their presence the struggling population of the belligerent provinces. But however this might be, our rebuke was taken in very good part by the ambassadors, who engaged on their return to propagate as far as they were able this desirable spirit among the people of their province, who, they nevertheless declared to us, only required to be assured of the probability of England's interference to induce them to rally to a man against the Muscovite.

The same disposition, they said, prevailed in the provinces of Zadoog, Kerkenai, Hatukoi, Demigni, Makoish, Besin, and Beslebai, which, with those of Shapsook and Natukvitch, enclose them as a

common centre. The most remote of these would take courage, and manfully resist the encroachments of Russia, provided there was the least prospect of their being ultimately assisted from abroad. The report had already reached them of Englishmen having landed in Circassia; and to keep alive the enthusiasm that had been created there, it was advisable to send them something, if it were only some superfluous portion of our wearing apparel, that would serve as ocular demonstration of the fact.

The conference closed with an expression of mutual good will; and acting upon the hint they had given us, as well as the recommendation of the judge, we made each of them as handsome a present as we could.

CHAPTER VIII.

Proclamation of the Russian General, and reply of the Circassians—Portraits of the Council—Landed Property among the Circassians—Presents—The Biter Bit.

IN two days the heralds returned from the Russian camp; they had overtaken General Willemineff at Ghelendjek, and said that although he had received them personally with great politeness, he had treated their propositions with derision. With respect to England in general, and their English visitors in particular, he had spoken in the most disparaging terms. The latter, he said, were unprincipled adventurers, who were endeavouring to mislead them for their own private ends, and that the best thing they could do was to cut them into pieces, or send them out of the country immedi-

ately. With respect to themselves, they had but one course to adopt, and that was submission to the Emperor. "And in case we should not adopt it," demanded the heralds, "what will be the consequence?" "Dreadful!" replied the General. "But that your countrymen may know my mind on the subject, I will instruct my Turkish secretary to draw up a manifesto on the subject, from which they may learn what they have to expect should they persist in this hopeless contest. Two days will I allow them for reflection; at the end of which time, should they refuse to submit, I shall march upon Pehat, burning every habitation in the way."

As the tamatas had foreseen, the heralds were plied hard with brandy and other stimulants, in order that something might be elicited from them as to the resources and intentions of their countrymen; but they had been on their guard, and both with respect to themselves and their English visitors, had, as they flattered themselves, by their ingenious falsehoods, made egregious asses of their catechisers. They had finally left the camp in very bad humour, as the general had made them no presents.

The proclamation of General Willemineff, which has already been published, has, I understand, been pronounced spurious by some of the German news-

papers, notoriously in the pay of Russia. It is nevertheless genuine. Both Mr. Bell and myself saw the General's signature subscribed to it, and it was twice translated to us *verbatim*; so that there cannot exist a doubt as to its authenticity. But the truth is, it never was intended for the ears of Europeans, but merely, by the blasphemous bombast it contains, to strike terror into the Circassians. Even in this point of view, however, it proved a failure, and only shewed Willemineff's complete ignorance with regard to the character and intelligence of the people he had undertaken to subjugate. Could he have heard, as we did, the peals of scornful laughter that rose at each moment from the Medjilis during the translation of his manifesto, I think he must have felt heartily ashamed of it. He seems to have forgotten that it was not the crouching and defenceless population of the steppes he was addressing, but a hardy race of mountaineers, who had learnt to venerate themselves as men, and whose religion taught them to view the being he was elevating into a god with contempt and abhorrence—the children of the wilderness!—imbued with its untameable spirit—who felt, when the contest had become too hot and unequal on the plains, they had only to plunge into their native forests and fastnesses, and dare him to follow them.

“ Translation of a Letter brought back by the Circassian Herald from General Willemineff, May 28, 1837.

“ You have no sovereign from the Caspian Sea to Anapa. You have, in disobedience to the Sublime Porte, invaded and plundered the Russian territory. If you are desirous of making peace, you must begin by restoring our plundered property, giving up deserters and prisoners, and finally recognising a sovereign prince to be nominated by Russia. All Englishmen who have visited you are impostors, not to be believed upon oath; they wish to obtain possession of the country, but it is far preferable to be governed by Russia than England. If you will relinquish all correspondence with England, France, and other European powers, and become faithful subjects of the Emperor, you may obtain peace. What is it you look for? Are you not aware that if the heavens should fall, Russia could prop them with her bayonets? The English may be good mechanics and artisans, but power dwells only with Russia. No country ever waged successful war against her. She has just obtained the exile of your ambassador from Constantinople; and if England be unable to shield one man, how can she protect a nation? Sefer Bey has been given up to us. If England wished to interfere,

she would have done so through our ambassador at London ; but the fact is, that Englishmen come here only for their own interest. Russia is the most powerful of nations. If you desire peace, you must be convinced there are but two powers in existence—God in heaven, and the Emperor upon earth ! If you desire peace, you must restore all you have plundered, and acknowledge no other authority but that of the Emperor. All prisoners and deserters must be delivered up to us, and when we place a governor over you, you must pay implicit obedience to his orders. Henceforward, when the Russians visit you, they must be well received, and supplied with every necessary. Travellers from Russia must have food and lodging, and be treated with the same consideration as your chiefs. I repeat, that deserters and prisoners must be given up ; and if within these few days any have come into your hands, they also must be surrendered to us. We must be allowed to go wherever we please, erect forts where we please, and be supplied with all labourers and materials we may deem necessary. If you refuse to listen to us, your country shall be taken from you, and yourselves treated with the utmost rigour. Be obedient, therefore, to my instructions. You must believe what we have told you, and you will be treated with lenity ; other-

wise, it will not be our fault if your valleys be destroyed with fire and sword, and your mountains trampled into dust! Yield, and you may retain your property; if not, all you possess, even your arms, shall be taken from you, and yourselves made slaves.

“ WILLEMINEFF.”

It was the wish of the Circassians that we should draw up an answer for them to this proclamation, probably because they expected to see in it some manifestation of the authority with which they thought we had been secretly invested by the Sultan, and which, notwithstanding all their cross examinations, we continued so pertinaciously to disavow. Some of them, apparently wiser than the rest, sily asked if the Russian General received positive orders from us to withdraw his troops whether he would obey. As we declined to interfere with it, the judge, after some discussion, wrote in conformity with the instructions he had received the following address, in which he flattered himself he had completely eclipsed the scribe of General Willemineff, both as to style and calligraphy. The principal chiefs and elders affixed their seals, with which each of them is provided, to this document.

*Translation of the Reply of the Circassians,
of the same date.*

“ To the Great Emperor Nicholas, and to our friend his faithful General and servant, greeting.

“ All you have this time written to us we have perfectly understood. You are a Russian general, and, thank God, we are true Mussulmans. Our Prophet has commanded us to refrain from falsehoods, and we obey his counsel. For ten years we have waged war with you, and it is well known to all the world we are not friends. The first of monarchs, the King of England, has commanded us to write. Of all nations under heaven, the greatest and most powerful is England: she takes precedence of all, and is never guilty of falsehood. How do you presume to say she is false? We know that when France invaded Egypt and attacked the Mamelukes, she was expelled from it by England, who thus earned the gratitude of all Circassians, and from that time have we been friendly to England. England never betrayed us; she has at all times been the protector of the Mussulmans. She now knows our situation, and she will hasten to our assistance. Even to the Caspian Sea we are united as brethren. We now write in the name of all, and write the truth. Being all united, we can engage that none

shall invade your territory, and, as the Circassians will not molest you, we expect that you will raise your fortresses here, and retire forthwith beyond the Kuban. A treaty may then be made between us, and we will mutually abstain from injuring each other in future. Do not imagine that we write this from fear, for we do so only in obedience to the orders of England, to whose authority we are now submitted. If you will not attend to what we say, do as you think proper; but send us no more letters, for we will not read them. Take care you do not deceive yourselves with the idea that we now write through dread of you; be assured we have no other motive in so doing than compliance with the request of the English government. Agreeably with the orders of the King of England, we desire to afford every facility to merchants trading to our coast, and for this reason we desire that your forts may be withdrawn as early as possible. You speak too loftily when you talk of destroying this country; such language becomes the Almighty alone. You seem proudly to imagine you can do all you please; but, though we be but a small nation, with God's blessing and the succour of England, we will resist you still. If you would reply to our present proposition, send your answer to the English government, at whose disposal we have placed ourselves; if not, write us

no more, but continue your war. Think not we write to you through fear of your cannons and your powder; we would not do so but for the orders of England, and if men should fail us, we would, rather than submit to you, seek for them in the mother's womb, to arm against you the infant yet unborn."

After dispatching the heralds a second time with this answer, and afterwards a third time with the renewal of the propositions, as they had been directed to do in Lord Ponsonby's communication to them, the Circassians, seeing they had nothing to hope from negotiation, prepared for war.

The Medjilis met for the last time, and, as is customary at the close of the proceedings, were addressed by a mounted warrior, who rode into the midst of the assembly, and proclaimed with a loud voice the resolutions which it had unanimously come to. He then exhorted everybody present to assist, by countenance and example, in carrying them into effect. (The orator on these occasions is not expected to use the *tatlu dil*; his language should be blunt and laconic.) "It has been resolved," he said, "not to give up our country to the Ghiaour, but to defend it to the last drop of our blood. Every man who dies in this righteous cause is a blessed martyr, and the gates of Paradise

will open to receive him as he falls. But woe to the perjured wretch who sacrifices to lucre his religion and his country!—an eternity of torments awaits him in the next world, nor, if we can help it, shall he escape in this; for we will set fire to his thatch, strip him of everything he possesses, and sell him and his family into slavery. We must still be of good heart!—the Padishah has not yet deserted us, and the King of England, who has become our konag, is arming to help us. If the gunpowder, cannon, and engineers are not forthcoming as promptly as we could desire, you must not on that account be discouraged. These are matters that cannot be dispatched all at once. Fair and softly! I say, and we will catch hares with arabas (wagons). An affair of two hundred oxen sometimes takes twenty years in settling; and do you think that a weighty business like this can be concluded in a day? Patience! (sabour soo!) I say again, and Inshallah! not only they, but the whole seven kingdoms, and Mehemet Ali Pasha, will soon bear a hand to drive away the accursed infidels from our soil. In the meanwhile, you must see to deserve the protection and favour which are thus extended to you; let us have no more plundering from one another; rob the Ghiaour, if you please; take his cattle, and his horses, and his children, till he makes peace with

you; all that is reasonable and fair: but you know it is a sin and a shame to steal from your Mussulman brethren. There are now two Englishmen among you taking notes of all they see, and you may be sure nothing will be stolen while they are here—no, not even a cow—but due notice will be given to the King of England. Therefore, let all those who have not yet taken an oath take one, to keep their hands off their neighbours' property."

During the delivery of this pithy harangue, the whole assembly, at every pause made by the orator, responded, "Amin! Amin!"

Before we take leave of the council, the reader will, perhaps, think it worth his while to be more particularly introduced to some of its leading members. I have myself a melancholy pleasure in reconvoking, by the aid of memory, the bold and venerable forms, the impersonations of prowess and wisdom, then gathered in peaceful conclave; but many of which, in the vicissitudes of an exterminating warfare, can even now only exist in the songs of their minstrels. Another generation, and they will have faded even from these. In a land of sages, heroes, and patriots, (where valour still relies on the might of a single arm,) fame has too many recent claims on her attention to busy herself with the sayings and doings of past ages.

There are three qualities, as I was informed by old Osmah, my djeraah, or squire, that entitle a man to celebrity here—bravery, eloquence, and hospitality; or, as he expressed it, “a sharp sword, a sweet tongue, or forty tables.”

Of Haoud Oglu Mansour Bey I have already spoken; so popular had he become that I have frequently heard him styled king of the country—a facetious piece of hyperbole, itself proving they had no fear of his becoming so in reality.

After him, the next in public estimation was Kheri Oglu Shamiz Bey; his praises were in the mouth of everybody, and, what the politic chief-tain cared more for, his counsels; his agency was rather felt than seen, and of himself I saw little for a month after my arrival; when he was pointed out to me, I beheld an old man of meek yet dignified demeanour, with a long white beard, tall, spare, and erect. His life had been spent in war and adventure, he having commenced his career at the siege of Ismael; subsequently fought against the French in Egypt, and signalized himself in the wars that had lasted so many years against Russia in the Cabardas. In short, he was scored all over with cuts and scratches, tokens of many a fray, that but for such remembrancers would have been long since forgotten. But though to us the Circassian Nestor may seem to have dwelt

somewhat too much on past campaigns, and too little on the present, his countrymen, to whom the personal experience of such a man is what books of travels and history are to us, appeared never tired of listening to him. Another quality for which he was much admired was, his perfect command of a temper naturally ungovernable.

On my expressing my surprise one day to a Circassian at the equanimity he had shewn under strong provocation and very trying circumstances, he replied : " The breast of Shamiz is a capacious one ; how much is there suppressed that others have no conception of ! " To violence or insult he would generally retort with quiet sarcasm or a dry *pek-ee*, (very well !) But there had been occasions when the reckless vehemency of his disposition had displayed itself with a startling and splendid effect ; when, for instance, in defence of a client, he drew his sword on the Pasha of Anapa. This was at a time when the Turks, whom Russia now asserts to have been masters of the country, had each of them his protector or Konag Bey among the Circassians, being even in their own fortress merely considered by them in the light of musafirs or guests. One of these, especially protected by Shamiz, being about to be put to death by the Pasha, the chivalrous old ouzden, happening to be in the town, and deem-

ing his honour involved in his immediate rescue, strode into the Selamlık, placed himself before the prisoner, and, unsheathing his yataghan, told the Pasha and his astonished myrmidons to touch him at their peril. In this trait we may perceive, perhaps, more to admire than to censure; but there are others I could mention in which he seems to have acted under far less creditable impulses, those of pride and revenge, passions which a strong intellect had taught him rather to dissemble than subdue. It was in this respect that he differed from Mansour; and though his calm and chastened demeanour, the stoicism and dissimulation superinduced by habit, might command respect, as consonant with the ideas of his countrymen, they could not make him beloved like the native candour and noble simplicity of the former. Yet was there neither rivalry nor ill-will between them; for while Mansour cheerfully yielded to the old man the outward deference which his years entitled him to, the other, with equal tact and good sense, subscribed to his real ascendancy; and both by their mutual concessions upheld the consequence and character of their tribe, that of the Chipakous; since the expulsion of the Ab-bats, not less paramount in Shapsook than Natuk-vitch.

In this illustrious tribe, composed of six or seven

families at the most, were also included Mehemet Indar Oglu, and Hadji Oli, the judge. To these we may add Arslan Gheri, a brave and distinguished warrior, in the prime of life, not less remarkable, however, for his modesty than bravery ; indeed, his extreme bashfulness, contrasted with a manly countenance, chest and shoulders of a Hercules, and what we had heard from those who had seen him put forth his might in battle, cleaving his way through the Russian ranks like a Rustan, was rather prepossessing than otherwise. He was evidently a man of action, and but an indifferent talker.

Among the most influential of the individuals who attended this assembly was also Keriak Oglu Ali Bey, of the tribe of Kutsuk, a man who not only challenged respect by his bodily attributes, being tall, gaunt, and sinewy as a giant, but who, by his native sturdiness of character, qualified by a ceremonious and plausible address, contrived to have a good deal of his own way in the country. Few cared to offend a man of his inches and determination ; and his neighbours, particularly the Armenians, invariably complied with the polite requests which, from time to time, agreeably to the customs of the country, he preferred to them for cattle or merchandize.

From the names I have already cited, it will be

seen that the principal personages in this province were, at the epoch I am alluding to, nearly all nobles. There were some commoners, however, who by their personal influence supported the credit of their order. There was Dazik Oglu Shupash, about as favourable a specimen of the Circassian Tocav, or yeoman, as could be met with,—a true patriot—a hearty and hospitable host—hardy in his habits, courteous in his manners, and scrupulously neat in his dress and accoutrements; nor was this care confined to the completeness and disposition of his own paraphernalia, but also, as became a thorough-bred Tocav, visibly displayed itself in the equipment and excellent condition of his horse. In the depth of winter, as at Midsummer, we have experienced from him the same cordial welcome, rousing his establishment, and, though a septuagenarian, bestirring himself in the snow to attend to our comforts. His close attention to all the forms, habits, and observances, which it is the object of education under an Ataluk to instil, rendered him a model to all the Dely Canns in the country; while his gallantry, cheerfulness, and youthful disposition, made him their especial favourite. It rarely happened that he found himself in any company of cavaliers, that all of them, by tacit consent, did not recognise him as their leader; and when, the year before

last, the Russians, in one of their inroads, had burnt his house, and captured his cattle, he was more than indemnified for the loss he had sustained by the officious zeal and voluntary contributions of his friends.

Another of the commoners much looked up to in Natukvitch was KhaÛs Demir. For Circassia he was a man of considerable substance ; that is to say, he had three or four thousand sheep, two or three hundred head of cattle, and some dozen of slaves. He had, also, a reputation for wisdom ; and though we might not allow his frigid manners and solemn aspect to be conclusive proofs of it, his countrymen had, no doubt, their reasons for this opinion. To his hospitality, though somewhat ostentatious, we can willingly bear witness. He was truly, as Osman would have characterized him, "a man of forty tables."

Lastly, I must not omit in this enumeration of the notables of Natukvitch our amiable friend Tchorook Oglu. It is true, his sleek, rosy cheeks, benevolent looks, and somewhat portly person, which the tightest compression of his belt could hardly reduce to orthodox dimensions, rather announced the boon companion than the well seasoned warrior ; but his liberality, firmness, and good sense, which in more peaceful times and countries would have elevated him considerably in

the scale of society, were even here tolerably appreciated. His pursuits, however, though mercantile—he being the wealthiest merchant in Circassia—did not prevent the good man being armed to the teeth, and taking the field like the rest.

The attendance on this occasion of chieftains and elders from Shapsook, though that province is more powerful and populous than Natukvitch, was inferior both in point of numbers and consideration. The reason of this, in great measure, proceeded from the expatriation of the tribe of the Abbats, as they formerly took the same lead in Shapsook as the Chipakous did then in Natukvitch; and owing to their absence, they had extended their influence there almost to the same degree as in their own province. The Tocavs, or yeomanry, who had expelled them, and had before felt so jealous of their power, could not make up their minds to look up with the same respect to any of their own body. Even Khoros Oglu Amecz, the most distinguished of them, besides labouring under disgraceful imputations, felt he wanted the authority which had enabled his aristocratic rival to wield and direct their counsels. The consequence was, that no general measure for the public weal could be discussed or adopted in Shapsook, unless the Chipakous came to sanction and countenance them by their presence. There

were, nevertheless, two nobles of considerable influence, though of less important tribes, belonging to this province, but neither of them present at the council; these were, the famous Hadji Guz Beg, who, though a keen fighter, never meddled with councils; and Schahin Gheri, an ouzden, highly esteemed, but who, being at feud with Shamiz Bey, was obliged, in order to avoid personal collision with him, to absent himself. I shall have occasion hereafter to speak at some length of both these individuals.

The Shapsookians present on this occasion were, therefore, all Tocavs; and the chief of them, as I have before said, Ameerz. There was, besides, a mild and venerable looking man of the name of Nasswa, who was the most celebrated for eloquence of that province—he had the *tatlu dil*, or “sweet tongue,” in perfection; but of its mellifluous quality, as I knew nothing of the language, I was, of course, no judge; but from the prodigious quantity of it, which the old man was in the habit of retailing, *ore rotundo*, and with half-shut eyes, to the council, he might have robbed half the bee hives in Shapsook. In opposition to the Demosthenean precept, he used very little gesture, and his language flowed in an easy and monotonous cadence, very like that of the neighbouring brook;

indeed, when once set a going, it seemed as little likely to stop.

From his cot on the Aboon had also come the brave yeoman Djanboulat, who, if he had not so much to say for himself, the minstrels had, for his exploits were their constant and favourite theme. Certainly such a concentration of daring and vigour as, warmed by a cordial smile, glowed beneath the beetling forehead and shaggy eyebrows of Djanboulat I have never seen in human face beside. The minstrels, as I have said, were full of his achievements; and one of the stories they record of him was this—

The Tchernamortsies had crossed the Kuban, and falling suddenly, in the night, on the hamlets along the banks of the Azips, had swept away the cattle, and were returning with their spoil to the well-guarded ford of Ekaterinodar. In the meanwhile the rifles of the Circassians, as the signal was answered from hamlet to hamlet, had spread the alarm far and wide over the country, and a numerous band, under the guidance of Djanboulat, was soon on the track of the marauders.

The Tchernamortsies, overtaken and intercepted on the plains of the Kuban, saw they must either fight or relinquish their booty, and preferred the former. Part of their horsemen were directed to

drive the cattle towards the Kuban, while the main body faced their pursuers; on perceiving which, the Circassians divided their force, and the combat became general. It was in these encounters, when, dispersing over the field, the combatants fought hand to hand, that the superior training of the Circassian cavalier had so often given him the advantage, and in which he now engaged with the greatest confidence. On this occasion, the Tchernamortsies fought with great obstinacy; the battle was fierce, bloody and protracted. The time, I have observed, was night, and the combatants were involved in its obscurity; but the report, a disheartening one, had got into circulation among the Circassians, that on the side of their adversaries was fighting one of those mysterious Giaours of whom all had heard, but few had hitherto met with, on whom the edge of the sharpest sabre falls innocuous as a rush.

In the grey of the morning, as it unfolded the *melée* more distinctly to view, the invulnerable champion (both he and his horse being apparently of preternatural proportions) was seen careering about the field, dealing destruction wherever he came. Resistance, therefore, had almost ceased, and victory for once had declared itself for the Tchernamortsies. The cattle was their own beyond dispute; they were carrying it off in the

very teeth of the astonished and paralyzed Circassians, when Djanboulat, unable to brook this unheard-of complication of loss and disgrace, suddenly flung away his sabre and unsheathed his *cama*, exclaiming, "If that cannot slay you, *bes-lemeh* (nursling) of the devil, this shall! *Bismallah!*" rushed to the encounter. The sword of his wizard antagonist was received, as it descended, on the gauntleted arm of the Circassian, who, grappling with him forthwith, buried the blade of his *cama* in his heart. With the fall of their leader fell the hopes and courage of the Tchernamortsies, and the war-cry of the Circassians rose with deafening shrillness from all sides of the plain as they charged and finally put them to the rout. The pursuit was hot, the road strewn with corpses to the Kuban, which few on that day, as the minstrels relate, were destined to repass.

The proceedings of the council had occupied four or five days, in the course of which we had repeatedly changed our residence, ascending from verdant stage to stage the stream of Adhencum. So great an assemblage of people on one spot was necessarily, in the absence of all public funds for the purpose, a heavy tax on their entertainers; no wonder, therefore, they sought to lighten the burden by shifting it as often as they could to the shoulders of different individuals. The country

through which we passed was exceedingly fertile, and, as we again approached the mountains, very picturesque. It is everywhere intersected by inclosures, some composed of quickset hedges, and some of the trunks and branches of trees closely interwoven; so that in its general appearance, as well as in the quality of the soil, a rich black loam, covered with the most luxuriant verdure, the face of the country between the mountains and the plains bore a striking resemblance to that of England. Inclosures here form the only title-deeds to an estate; when once obliterated, the land reverts to the common stock, and may be appropriated on the same conditions by anybody who is disposed to cultivate it. The Circassians cannot see how, except for immediate use, anybody can claim an exclusive right to the soil; with them all the elements are in common, earth as well as air, fire as well as water, since fuel may be had in any quantity for the cutting. Property here consists in the hands employed in cultivation, cattle, and produce already realized. Their ideas with respect to it apparently indicate a nomadic origin. It is true they have houses instead of tents, but they are of the simplest and most uniform construction, mere cages of wickerwork plastered with clay, the same in pattern and materials that have been used for

ages; a proof, if the fact required one, that their inmates are seldom long together stationary, as in that case they would be susceptible of improvement. At all the houses we lodged in, we met the same courteous and hospitable treatment. It is true we made presents; but we were told they were unnecessary, and that we were introducing a bad custom into the country by making them. On the other hand, we rarely found they were declined; and in a few instances they were importunately solicited. There was one person in particular whose meanness and mendicancy were very offensive to us, and this was Calabut Oglu Hatukoi Bey, an unworthy member of the tribe Chipakou.

My object in presenting him to the reader is, that he may have some idea of a disagreeable variety of the human species, which can only flourish under institutions like those of the Caucasus. These, as he must have perceived, have their origin in a spirit of unbounded generosity, and a brave contempt of worldly pelf when put in competition with it. It is impossible that any man can, under such circumstances, grow rich, since the indigent demand almost as a right to be supplied from the superfluity of their more fortunate brethren, and the person who is known to possess

even the duplicate of a shirt or a pair of shoes is expected to part with it for the benefit of the shirtless or unshod. However punctilious in other respects, with regard to property they make no ceremony at all, but are expected to give and take with equal indifference. Such a system must necessarily keep things in a very primitive state, nor could it well co-exist with the establishment of a currency; it has also its serious disadvantages, entitling as it does the slothful and dastardly to share the fruits of industry and enterprise, and thus in some measure acting as a drawback on them, degenerating, moreover, with some into a beggarly source of gain, and engaging the attention of the baser part in an idle traffic where no reciprocal benefit can accrue, but each endeavours to overreach the other, and obtain a balance of petty advantages to himself.

Although in this country we meet with examples of the most chivalrous disinterestedness, men who will share in the danger and refuse the spoil, who glory in sacrificing everything for their friends, there are a few who only seek to take advantage of these dispositions, and are greedily on the watch to turn the present-making system to their own account. Of the latter description of persons was Hatukoi, whose disposition, naturally mercenary, had by these customs received a de-

velopment at once ludicrous and disgusting. There was nothing, we were assured, that this man would not do for gain, and he had actually sold the children of his brother, who, at his death, had appointed him their guardian. His conduct had been viewed with horror, as his brother had been a hadji of great repute and sanctity. It was in vain the sordid wretch excused himself by saying, "the pestilent urchins had sharp teeth, and were always biting his shins;" he was universally execrated for it.

His demeanour since he had obtained a sight of our boxes had become so very extravagant, that we positively thought him deranged; he had threatened to belabour my old Hadji for not presenting him to us as the greatest prince in Circassia; and our good-natured Georgian was actually worried into a fever, having "his dull ear vexed" night and day with the pompous details of Hatukoi's grandeur, forming all, it appeared, so many items of claim upon ourselves. It was useless, on the other hand, repelling him; he would take no repulse; and I never met a man who, for the sake of presents, would, in eastern phraseology, "eat as much dirt" as Hatukoi. The only thing he was offended by were the praises of his neighbours, for they indicated that presents might be made in another quarter.

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Many were Hatukoi's devices to ingratiate himself with us, most of which, as decidedly beneath the dignity of history, I shall omit; but his attempt to make us pay for the hospitality which he had himself eagerly pressed upon us was so contrary to the usages of the country, and occasioned such scandal to his countrymen, as perhaps to be deserving of record. Such tricks upon travellers, as well as the ingenious process of which he presumed we were equally ignorant—that of giving a small fish to catch a great one—an artifice somewhat stale among men of his own stamp in Circassia, may be instructive to those who visit it, or rather him, in future. For our own part, we were at the time most comfortably in the dark with respect to all these particulars, and attributed the exultation with which he assisted us to alight, and saw us and our treasures safely deposited in his guest-house, to the excessive warmth of his hospitality.

With equal simplicity did we do ample justice to the good cheer he set before us. Mutton, the fat of whose tails is delicious, turkeys, yoghort, cream, and virgin-honey of the finest quality, baksema, or mead, and very good pastry, certainly did much to reconcile us to our host, who, divested of his tunic, and in his short silk *anteri*, long, lank, and frisky, graciously did the honours, sparing no

pains to propitiate us, and finally producing, with a look of ineffable triumph, a tea-service in china, which he had brought with him from Stamboul, and only exhibited on grand occasions.

But to all his manifold merits and ingenious contrivances we remained for some time equally blind, and no less so (when on the eve of our departure he looked for the fruits of all the pampering he had bestowed on us, and puffing through our dragoman on himself,) to the anxiety which displayed itself in his pinched and simpering physiognomy, the most comically intense I had ever seen. In taking leave of him, however, among other trifles we presented him with were some massive chains of Paris metal for the ladies of his harem, which we had desired our interpreter to inform him, though not of pure gold, were nevertheless worn as ornaments in Europe; but which (Djeolier having intentionally, I fear, omitted to translate this part of our discourse) he had pounced upon with all the avidity of a biter bit, actually forgetting, as he gorged the bait, for the first time in his life, to ask for something more. But we had not yet done with him, as we found, by many a day, being destined to be "pestered by this popinjay" during the whole of our stay in the province. We had scarcely been installed an hour in our new konag when he again presented him-

self, his *kamtchik*, or whip, in one hand, and a piece of flint in the other. On this latter several marks had been rubbed with metal of some sort, and he now particularly requested us to inform him, as mineralogists, whether it was gold or brass.

Agreeably surprised at the spirit of scientific research which had induced him to post after us so precipitately, we examined the marks very attentively, and gave it as our decided opinion it was the latter.

This was enough for Hatukoi; he had convicted us out of our own mouths; and having accordingly taken our dragoman aside, he utterly confounded him by the following magnificent tirade:—
 “Are you well aware who it is that now addresses you? Know you not Hatukoi, Prince of Ghelendjek,” (it is true he formerly resided in the bay of Ghelendjek, before it was occupied by the Russians,) “of the mighty tribe of Chipakou! whose renown and influence are not only unequalled by those of prince or ouzden in Natukvitch, but extend to every part of these mountains, from Ghelendjek to the Kuban; from Anapa to Karat-chai? these are facts you may be ignorant of, nor less perhaps of another, that he is well known and held in profound estimation by our Lord the Sultan, also by Mehemet Ali Pasha, and the seven kings of Christendom to boot; and is it to a

prince so esteemed and celebrated, one whom the kings and potentates delight to honour, that the Beyzades have thought fit to dishonour by presenting him—*Mashallah*!—with copper instead of gold. Of my personal merits and the services I have already done and can render them, of the arrangements of my house, and of the entertainment they have received, I say nothing, it is *âib*—a solecism in our manners to speak of such things. I will only defy any house in these mountains to shew the like of it—couches so splendid, or victuals so neat (*temiz*). Remember, I ask nothing for all these things; all that I desire is, that you will take back these trinkets, which are only fit for children, to the Beyzades, when I am sure they will hasten to rectify their mistake.”

We were at first not a little dismayed by this message; but were presently consoled by the assurances we received at all hands, that so far from joining in the praises he bestowed so liberally on himself, everybody heartily despised him; and though certainly of a good *tokum*, or tribe, he was a disgrace, instead of being an honour to it; or, as Kutsuk Ali Bey rather strongly expressed himself, “its very excrement!” Viewing him, therefore, in that light, we treated him thenceforward, to his no small discomfiture, with the contempt he deserved; so that, after a month of alternate cringing

and hectoring to no purpose, he abjectly entreated our dragoman to give him back the chains. But these had already been disposed of to others less difficult to please than himself; however, to rid ourselves of his importunity, we gave him one of the cavalry regulation swords we had brought out. This he carried off with great glee, and having swaggered about the province with it for about a month, declaring to all he met that the sword had been sent to him as a mark of personal respect by his Majesty William the Fourth, he sold it for seven hundred piastres !

CHAPTER IX.

March of the Russian general to Pchat—Superstitions and social qualities of the Circassians—The fortress of Aboon—Mahomedanism in the Caucasus.

OUR party now took the road which had, within a few days, been passed by the Russian army, of whose movements we continued to receive information as we advanced towards the scene of operations. A junction having been formed by the corps under Willemineff with that which had landed at Ghelendjek, that general, agreeably with the notice he had given to the Circassians, commenced his march to Pchat. The first serious opposition he encountered was in the Valley of Hyderbey, whose locality I have already described. As the defiles began to close on his troops, a gall-

ing fire was kept up from the wooded eminences by which they were overhung; and his artillery having failed to silence it, his progress was for a few days arrested. His only resource, therefore, was his riflemen, a large body of whom had, for the first time, accompanied the army, and were now directed to clear the woods of these skirmishers, a task which, after the Circassians had exhausted their powder, they at length succeeded in accomplishing, and as the rest of the army advanced, continued to protect their flanks on the heights above.

Deeming it of the greatest moment that the warriors by whom we were attended should join, as soon as possible, their countrymen already engaged with the enemy, I was surprised to observe the very leisurely pace at which we rode. The fact was, that the route and intentions of the Russian general having been ascertained, the alarm which had at first pervaded the whole country extended now no further than the threatened district, and our band, sure of overtaking the enemy at last, were unwilling to fatigue their horses by unnecessary exertion. Nobody would have imagined, to have seen them, what the nature of their expedition was—sometimes scattered over the field like a hunting party riding to cover—sometimes

winding slowly in long procession through the forest glade, chatting, singing, racing, and now and then actually chasing; for whenever a hare was started, which happened not unfrequently, all the Dely Canns would set up a view-hollo! and scamper after it, not with a view to a frolic, or out of wantonness, but to prevent its crossing our path, which at this conjuncture would have been a pernicious omen. Indeed, the crossing of a fox or wolf is, on the contrary, considered auspicious. These are predatory animals, whereas the hare is the unresisting quarry.

While on the subject of superstition, to which it will be readily credited such a people are remarkably prone, I should mention an incident which produced a great sensation about this time—viz., the apparition of a brilliant star, which, bursting into a shower of glittering fragments, and gilding it awhile in their descent, were finally swallowed up in utter darkness. Such a phenomenon could portend nothing less than the approaching destruction of the army over which it displayed itself; at least, such was the belief of the multitude. Those of the chiefs who could have explained to them that it was a signal, which had been preconcerted between the army and the fleet, prudently held their tongues on the subject.

We were proceeding, as I have already said, at an easy pace, when one afternoon, Mansour, who, with some other chieftains, headed the party, suddenly came to a halt in the midst of the open plain. The whole company, in like manner, reined in their horses, and dismounted. For a brief space, with his hands uplifted, every warrior seemed rooted to the spot in silent devotion. Then, resuming their saddles, they pursued their journey as composedly as before. On demanding an explanation of this singular spectacle, I was informed that one of the most valiant men of Shapsook had the year before fallen amidst the Russian bayonets on this very spot, and they had, agreeably to custom, been offering up a prayer for his soul. Many instances of this pious and charitable feeling was I destined to witness before I left the country, and I am sure no unprejudiced person who has been a sojourner among them but will confess that the social sympathies are in these woods and wilds of Circassia of a far more sincere, generous, and diffusive nature than those which connect the societies of civilized and populous cities.

It is a common boast that civilization, by multiplying man's wants, enlarges the sphere of his enjoyments; may it not, at the same time, contract that of his affections? Do not wealth, luxury,

and even knowledge itself, generate pride, and erect barriers between man and man? In the patriarchal simplicity which prevails here we find no limits to good fellowship; neither their joys nor their sorrows are selfish; no wedding or funeral takes place but the whole country assist in the celebration—welcome, though unbidden guests. A man will frequently, on such occasions, expend the half of his substance in diffusing as widely as possible the prevailing sentiment, be it of domestic happiness, or of regret for the departed.

A few hours after we had witnessed the affecting ceremony above mentioned, we arrived at the house of Djimboulat, where the sounds of merriment announced a marriage-feast in progress. The whole party of us were immediately invited to partake of the good cheer, and it would have been an insult to have passed on our way without doing so.

But we were this time debarred from the pleasure of mixing in the hymeneal festivities, as our presence seemed suddenly to have put to flight a whole bevy of fair damsels who had been engaged in dancing with the young men, but whom, on our arrival on the lawn, marshalled by a troop of discreet and hooded matrons, we saw in full retreat from it, under the belief that we should be greatly scandalized by such proceedings. Such promis-

cuous familiarity between the sexes they knew to be discountenanced by the Osmanlis, and concluded, *à fortiori*, that it must be very distasteful to Englishmen. This, indeed, appeared to be the idea of some of our Turkish friends themselves, one of whom, on a similar occasion, said to me in a confidential whisper, "If ever we succeed in establishing our authority here, we will soon put a stop to these barbarous and licentious practices."

The deserted and uncultivated state of the plain which we now entered upon, shewed we were in the vicinity of the fortress of Aboon. Still, the flourishing crop of thistles, waving sometimes above our heads, afforded a melancholy proof of the soil's fertility; a proof which even my friend Jacoob Bey, Caledonian as he was, could willingly have dispensed with. We were prevented for some time by this forest of unprofitable vegetation from seeing the fortress itself, which is on a slope, and commanded by a hill at a few hundred paces distance. The ground between us was broken, though not hilly; but at length, on reaching a knoll, surmounted by a clump of beech trees, where two Circassians were on duty as sentinels, we obtained a distinct view of it. Oblong in its form, being about three hundred yards in length, and a hundred in breadth, it consisted merely of a wall of earth and a ditch, the former apparently about

twelve feet high, and the latter of the same dimensions in depth and width. Within this rampart were three or four wooden buildings, intended for barracks and magazines, gabled, and rising considerably above the parapet, which was bristling all around with ordnance of the heaviest calibre. More like the encampments thrown up by the Romans in the heart of hostile Gaul or Germany than a modern fortress, constructed on scientific principles, it nevertheless served as a bugbear to the surrounding plain, reducing its environs, for three or four miles, to a desert, through which the Aboon, stripped of the foilage that had formerly marked its meanders, and embowered the cottages on its banks, now wound its way in solitary nakedness.

Every tree in the neighbourhood had been felled, lest it should afford an ambush to the lurking Circassian. The condition, however, of these intruders, immured in their solitary fortress, was far from enviable, and it may be questioned if the hardships they endured were not much severer than those they inflicted. Once a year their solitude is relieved by the arrival of a detachment of troops with stores and provisions from the Kuban. The duties in the interim, both here and in the other fortresses, are laborious and harassing in the extreme. At every ten paces along the wall is

stationed a sentinel; one half of the garrison is constantly under arms during the night, and they are in a perpetual state of trepidation. No sooner had our party appeared on the hillock, than, as if by magic, the rampart, along its whole circumference, was gleaming with bayonets. Disease, arising from poor and bad nourishment, consisting for the most part of a black mouldy bread and a thin farinaceous soup, combining with the pestilential miasma, occasions great mortality; to which, there is no doubt, their close confinement also materially contributes.

To relieve the monotony of the latter, they make an occasional *sortie*, and sometimes, though very rarely, succeed in setting fire to the habitations, or carrying off the cattle of the Circassians, who complain that they have no means of retaliating upon them, since the Russians have nothing but a few gruntern grubbing under their guns, which, as Mussulmans, they cannot touch. All these particulars were furnished us by deserters, one or more of whom are to be found in every considerable establishment in the country; and, considering the lives they lead in garrison, it is no wonder they should be anxious to change them at any risk. So general is the disposition to desert, that it is impossible to prevent their escape, since, in this case, *quis custodiat ipsos custodes*. The treatment they

meet with from their Circassian masters is in general humane and considerate; though employed in cutting wood and other domestic drudgery, their powers are not overtasked. After a few years' servitude, they are usually provided with wives, in order that they may increase their master's live stock, who is enriched in proportion as they are prolific; indeed, their uncommon activity in this respect is not always restrained within legitimate bounds, and the consequence has been, if we believe the Turkish merchants, a sensible deterioration in the breed.

High cheek bones and turn-up noses are coming far too much into fashion for the Constantinopolitan market. A great proportion, perhaps half, of these deserters are Poles; but the Circassians, I believe, make little distinction between them and the Russians, though, at the suggestion of Mr. Urquhart, the chiefs and elders have endeavoured to ameliorate their condition, and put them with regard to it on the same footing as the native serfs. I doubt, however, if these distinctions can be to any extent enforced, as it is difficult, in the first instance, for the Circassians to discriminate between the two nations, since all, with a view to better treatment, call themselves Polak when they surrender, and the subsequent favour they meet with must, whatever general regulations

may be made, depend as much on their individual conduct and capacity as the disposition of their masters. It is certain that Poles as well as Russians are still sold to the Turks, and I have been informed by a Polish officer, who was employed by the government at Angora, that he found at least eight hundred of his countrymen serving as slaves in that Pashalik alone.

Our route from the fortress of Aboon lay in a S. E. direction, and we were soon involved in the intricacies of a mountainous region, differing materially from that by which we had descended to the plains. Instead of opening to them in long ravines, like magnificent vestibules, as before, the hills presented to us their precipitous sides, rising range above range, in the semblance of a triple wall; and the paths by which we were admitted, and gradually enfolded in them, were certainly of the most capricious description, sometimes indulging in endless sinuosities along the declivities, and now shooting abruptly over the impending ridge. More than once the path was so steep that we had to dismount and lead our horses.

The shades of evening had begun to deepen around us when we reached the beautiful hamlet, "navelled in woody hills," called Aboon Bashi, or the Sources of the Aboon. These tributary rills are in great measure concealed by the very luxu-

riance of the vegetation they have caused; and the stream itself, pushed aside in its course by a hillock, half way up whose gentle acclivity there stands a mosque, while the brow is encircled by cottages, might also, as it sweeps in the deep channel behind them, escape observation, but for the sound of rushing waters where it sinks in the shade of overhanging trees down a craggy ravine to the right. The sight of this stream could not fail to interest us greatly. We had seen it on the plain, where the usurping castle of the Muscovite had spurned the cottages from its banks. We now saw it in its inaccessible birth-place, where foot of Muscovite had never trod; where, a stranger to oppression, and exulting in the impregnable defences she had thrown around him, the Circassian might well have been forgiven had he raised an altar to Liberty herself. In olden times, (and, indeed, these superstitions still cling to many parts of the Caucasus,) when for each separate blessing they fabled a deity who received their thanks for it, when autumnal sacrifices were rendered to Seoséres, and Merissa was propitiated for her honey, here Freedom's temple would not have been misplaced. The rude mosque which has here been consecrated to a purer worship—that of the great Author of all blessings—would then have been her appropriate shrine.

This edifice, though of the simplest structure, being built entirely of wood, bears, nevertheless, both in size and materials, the same proportion to the houses as churches do elsewhere. The minaret to it was, if anything, still more primitive, consisting of a tall poplar, up which the Muezzim ascended, by notches cut in the stem, to a basket that served for a gallery at the top. He had just taken his station there, and was chanting his summons to the house of prayer, as we arrived. The sounds were familiar to us; they were such as hallow the vesper hour all over the East; which I had heard so often as the sun sank over Stamboul, when, from a thousand minarets at once, it burst from as many voices, while Europe and Asia contended to swell it over the Bosphorus; or at sunset, in the solitude of the ocean, when it seemed rather to blend with than disturb the breathless adoration of nature; but which, often as I had heard and been impressed by it, had never raised the emotion produced by the cry in the wilderness; loud, thrilling, and prolonged, it proclaimed amidst its rocks, caverns, and forests, (the haunts of ancient superstition,) now sinking into deeper shadow, the unity and greatness of the living God, and invited all who heard it (and one would have thought they were few in such a place) to his worship. Nor, indeed, did they assemble in

any great numbers, not because the district was thinly populated, but that Islamism, though professed by all, is as yet, in its duties and observances, but slightly cultivated here: the great majority of the people are uncircumcised both in Shapsook and Natukvitch; and on many parts of the coast the pagan rites and sacrifices I have alluded to have been modified, but not entirely suppressed by it. The religious groves, or Kodosh, as they call them, are still objects of a veneration far more real and sincere than the mosques, and the festivals still solemnized in them draw much greater multitudes than the Namaz. Islamism, countenanced and practised by the chiefs and the effendis, is respected; but paganism, from its associations with their customs, habits, and feelings, is much more popular. At least, this is the case as regards these two provinces and the sea-coast, where, not forty years ago, the whole population were idolators, and have only been recently converted by Turkish missionaries. In the Abbassak, the Cabardas, Great and Little, and the other Kuban provinces, Mahomedanism is of an earlier date, and universally diffused.

The general influence of Mahomedanism in the Caucasus has been most salutary, both in a moral and political point of view. At least, this is my honest conviction, and I state it fearlessly, being

as fully convinced that the interests of Christianity are never promoted by disguising what we believe to be the truth. "The religion of all pagans indiscriminately," says one of our greatest moralists, "has often been written of by zealous Christians in the worst spirit of Paine and Voltaire."

With doctrinal and theological questions, "the reason for the hope that is in them," the multitude here, as well as elsewhere, may not be very deeply conversant; but that which is most practical in religion, and which serves as a foundation to all moral obligation—their responsibility to the God who has created them, and their hopes and fears of a hereafter, are subjects now very extensively felt and understood among them. By submitting it to a superhuman tribunal, whose standard of good and evil is positive and immutable, the duty of man to his neighbour is placed on a basis very different to the sandy and shifting one of expediency; one which the worldly doctrines of the utilitarian would tend to substitute for it, and which, in a country like Circassia, have been the natural consequences (as will be seen in the inquiry I propose to make with respect to its tribes) of its civil institutions.

Where hostile as well as friendly relations prevail in a community, and where retaliation is indispensable for the ends of justice, fraud and

force are naturally constituted into virtues. The ancient religion of the country, like all other paganism, had little to do with morality. Its divinities were propitiated or appeased as the authors of blessings or calamities, but were not supposed to concern themselves greatly in the actions of mankind. Islamism, on the contrary, is most dogmatical with respect to them, so much so, indeed, that its compatibility with institutions so unscrupulous would be a matter of no small astonishment, did we not reflect that Christianity itself has been engrafted on many a stock comparatively as heterogeneous. Christianity, however, asserts her empire only over the hearts and consciences of men. Islamism claims a temporal jurisdiction, and militates therefore against all that opposes her supremacy. Her levelling principles have destroyed the power of the nobles here, and, notwithstanding the tenacity with which the system is preserved, will, I believe, ultimately undermine the administrative authority of the tribes. Did the limits I have proposed to myself allow of it, the progress of this contest would form an interesting subject of inquiry; as it is, I can only afford a cursory glance at the advantages which Islamism brings with her to it.

One of the chief recommendations of this religion to the people, as well as a voucher of its

sincerity, is its cheapness—it costs them nothing; the functions of the priesthood, of the Imaum or Mollah, are purely honorary, are derived from superior learning or piety, and combined with any other pursuit or occupation. The cadis or magistrates are merely remunerated for the time and attention they give to the affairs of the community. Another source of the favour it has met with is no doubt to be found in its moral precepts, borrowed in a great measure from the gospel itself, and strictly in accordance with the natural dictates of justice and humanity. But the cause which I believe has been of all others the most conducive to its establishment is, the sentiment of equality which the noble zeal of its unworldly professors not only inculcates, but enforces between man and man. To them who really feel their dignity as heirs of a glorious immortality, what are earthly distinctions?

I am aware that this feeling, were the intentions of its Divine Founder duly fulfilled, would be still more powerful with the disciples of Christianity. But how far does the spirit of humility affected by them actually govern their relations of life? Does not the pride of birth, of wealth, or even knowledge itself, prevail over them all? The only pride the Mussulman feels is spiritual; and though it may lead him to despise those whose

hopes have not a similar foundation, it establishes between him and his co-religionaries a feeling of mutual consideration which all worldly respects must give way to. The Koran is the sole charter of his privileges—if weak, it is his shield against oppression; if powerful, a check upon it; in short, inadequate as it may be, it is with the nations of the East a substitute for constitutional rights. No wonder, then, that they seek to keep alive, in all its freshness and vigour, the religious zeal which prevents its becoming a dead letter; or that their faith in this palladium should manifest itself in a succession of devotional practices whose openness and frequency modern Christianity is far too lukewarm and modest to emulate. Whoever has kept company with Mussulmans must have been struck with the fact. They perform their ablutions, spread their carpets, and address themselves to their prayers as naturally and unreservedly as we sit down to our meals. Neither place nor person, if they can only ascertain the direction of the Kubleh, can be an obstacle to these duties. Their conversation, too, is full of appeals to the deity, of expressions of reliance on his goodness, or of submission to his will. Nobody fears the imputation of cant and hypocrisy where the prevalence of unbelief has not yet made piety appear unnatural. Hypocrisy, it is true, may thrive under

such circumstances; but are they not preferable to those where the mask of hypocrisy has become superfluous, because religion has ceased to be respected.

I believe, therefore, that it is the spirit of equality diffused by Islamism that has been the principal element of its success in the Caucasus. The hereditary power of the nobles has succumbed to it, and it has doubtless done much to ameliorate the condition of the serfs; for, as Mussulmans, they acquire a rank that, in a great measure, neutralizes all the distinctions of caste.

But it is chiefly from its political influence that the establishment of Islamism in the Caucasus has been important.

It is this circumstance which has constituted it from sea to sea a rampart against the encroachments of Russia, instead of a formidable chain of advanced posts in her hands, which with a Christian population it infallibly would have been, but which nothing but the most deplorable apathy on the part of those who are interested in opposing her can now permit it to become.

Christian Georgia, though comparatively isolated, and in many districts as naturally impregnable, has acknowledged her sway for the better part of a century. It forms the principal basis for the operations of her aggressive policy in

the East; while it is as certainly, on the other hand, the zeal of the Mussulman tribes that garrison the mountains behind, which renders it insecure.

The bonds by which Circassia, notwithstanding her independence,—an independence guaranteed by the distinctions of race, customs, and language,—is united to Turkey are those of a common faith; and the strength of those bonds must depend on that of the religious zeal which, for the reasons, temporal as well as spiritual, I have already adduced, is so peculiarly powerful with Mussulmans, binding every heart in which it burns in an electric chain of sympathy, an element of adhesion strong as it is subtle, and upon which the sword makes no more impression than it would on fire itself.

The mosque at Aboon Bashi (like all others, I believe) is intended not only for a place of worship, but as a medressé, or college for the education of students in the Mussulman law. The language taught there is Arabic, not Turkish; the former is the language of the Koran, and many of the cadis are proficient in it, without knowing a word of the latter.

The hodja, or dominee of this establishment, was duly presented to us, and comported himself with the gravity and importance peculiar to pedagogues

all over the world: it appeared also he was a rigid disciplinarian, and had refused to grant a holiday to his scholars, though the Russian cannon had been distinctly heard that morning in the neighbourhood of Pchat, and the elder boys had been longing for a shot at the Ghiaours from the woods.

CHAPTER X.

Effects of Lord Ponsonby's communication—Arguments of the chiefs against my joining the Circassian forces—Our landlord and his daughter—Security of property in Circassia.

THE number of our escort had by this time very much fallen off. The warriors, as we proceeded, had taken different routes, that they might more conveniently quarter themselves on the way. Hadji Oli, the judge, had been missing three days; having, as he afterwards alleged, some business of great importance to dispatch at home, (connected very probably with the distillery,) he had disappeared without taking leave of anybody. We saw little of him during the rest of the campaign; nor could he find any time to attend to public

business until the blasts of war were blown over, and the Russians had left the country.

We were now within a few hours' ride of Pchat, where we received positive information that Willemineff was already encamped with his army. Except at Hyderbey, he had encountered no serious opposition; and the reasons for this were, first, that the route taken by the Russian general was through a country comparatively easy of access and thinly inhabited; secondly, that he had refrained from exasperating the inhabitants by destroying their property; and thirdly, that Indar Oglu, the chief proprietor of Pchat (the place of his destination), was in very bad odour with his countrymen, who had consequently left him to shift for himself. To these causes of the inactivity displayed by the Circassians we may add another, perhaps the most powerful of them all, and that was, the communication made to them by Lord Ponsonby, which, by the illusive expectations it held out of England's diplomatic interference in their behalf, slackened their exertions, as they believed they would only be now attended with a useless effusion of blood.

But this is a subject to which I must revert hereafter, confining myself at present to this remark as to its evil tendency, which, in enumerating the causes of Willemineff's success, could

not with justice be omitted. Observing this apparent indifference on the part of the Circassians, both Mr. Bell and myself did not hesitate to urge them to a greater display of energy. But the chiefs had already decided on the plan of the campaign, which, as far as their influence availed, was conducted on Fabian principles, and which it was altogether useless in us to gainsay. I found also equally unavailing my request to be permitted to join their forces in the approaching struggle; they seemed determined that I should not accompany them, and they employed various arguments to dissuade me from it.

In the first instance, they represented that the hardships and privations to be encountered in this warfare were such as none but those who had been trained to them could support; for food, they were contented to put up with an occasional mouthful of fermented honey, which they call komil, and of which each warrior is provided with a small bagful at his girdle; for lodging, they were satisfied with a bed of leaves in the woods; then they could by no means answer for their own forbearance, or that, in the excitement and confusion which prevailed, I should be treated with the consideration I deserved; since the persons who now behaved with such urbanity would, when once in presence of the enemy, be metamor-

phosed into wild beasts, and I should find myself among so many rampant lions. Their strongest objection, however, was my European surtout, which I had not yet been able to change for a Circassian tunic, and which, they said, would, in the skirmishes, inevitably render me a mark for their own rifles.

This argument *ad hominem* I thought was a reasonable one, and accordingly determined to wait till the coat which was making for me should be finished. This proved a tedious operation; for not only had the wool to be woven and dyed, but the silver lace, with a broad selvidge of which it must be garnished, had also to be knit; and though some of the most expert princesses were employed in the task, it was one which could not be accomplished in a day—a week—nor a month. I was, in the meanwhile, consoled by the assurance of those who had been permitted to see the work during its progress, that it would be one of surpassing grandeur when completed.

I should here observe, also, that taste and skill in the manufacture of all articles of dress, from the woolly calpac to the morocco slipper, are held to be the highest attributes of the fair sex, prized even more than the splendour of beauty itself. Nor can greater renown be acquired by the arms

of the bravest warrior than the noble spinsters and sempstresses achieve at the point of their needles. And when we come to consider the state of the arts and sciences here, and that were it not for the accomplishments of the females of his family a man might go without garments altogether, upper or nether, excepting such as without more to-do he transferred from the back of his sheep to his own, the extent of his obligations, as well as the praise he assigns to them, will be readily assented to.

An arrangement which also occupied our attention at this time was the purchase of horses for ourselves and domestics, an affair, in the eyes of the Circassians, of the greatest importance, and one which they must have thought we treated with an undue degree of levity, having, in some instances, ventured to buy them without consulting our Konag Bey, a man of great wisdom and experience, and a profound connoisseur in horseflesh. There is usually on these occasions much deliberation employed. The long and careful scrutiny—the discussions on points and paces—then the galloping, walking, trotting, and charging of walls and fences, to shew how well the animals are in hand—and then the bargain, at the driving of which no Yorkshireman could shew more tact

and ingenuity, are indispensable preliminaries to a purchase. The man who should do these things negligently must not look for respect in Circassia.

Nothing could disconcert them more than when we gave to the dealer the price he first asked for his horse ; it being the custom to demand at least twice as much as it is worth, for the pleasure of protracting the bargain. As guests and strangers, it would have been shameful to cheat us ; but not to display their acuteness in making the best of the market would have been scarcely more pardonable. To relieve them in this dilemma, we employed our servants to buy for us ; and then the fuss that took place, the arguing, demurring, higgling, and hair-splitting, all carried on with the most exemplary patience and imperturbable gravity, proved extremely satisfactory to all parties.

The Caucasian breed of horses varies according to the locality in which they are found ; for while those on the coast and in the higher mountains are small and ill-conditioned, those on the downs and the plains make very fair hacks and chargers. The Cabardian race is the most esteemed, and some of them would not disgrace a field day in Leicestershire. Ten pounds is the price paid here for a good horse, three to six for an ordinary one. Mares, which are chiefly kept for breeding, and which a chieftain considers it

derogatory for him to ride, fetch from two to five pounds. The same prejudice existed against mares in the middle ages in Europe. The horses are, on the whole, a hardy and docile race, well adapted to the service in which they are employed, involving frequently, in forays and excursions, great privation and fatigue. The Circassians treat them with care, and even with affection; and though they are never seen to caress their children, they will kiss and fondle their horses; nor are they less solicitous about their winter stock than that of their families. They have all, to distinguish their pedigree, some marks on the haunches, a sabre, a horse-shoe, &c., and the proprietor of many a sorry hack consoles himself by pointing to this evidence of its latent good qualities.

For some months in the year they are set at liberty, and roam in herds over extensive pastures. In the winter it is considered a friendly office, and an usual compliment, to take charge of another person's horse which may be out of condition, and return it to him plump and serviceable. Some of their notions with regard to horses are singular, for though they prevent them drinking when heated, they do not hesitate to bathe them in the coldest streams. After a ride, they are attached to the trees in the neighbourhood of the

guest-house, and are not unsaddled and taken to the stable for three or four hours. This precaution saves their backs from being galled or chafed. In no part of the Caucasus are horses shod. In the plains of the Kuban there is no occasion for shoes, and they are, perhaps, better without them; but on the mountains and sea coast it would be of great advantage to introduce them; it is both tedious and painful to the traveller to see them limping along the stones for want of them.

The place which the chiefs had fixed upon for our residence during their absence was the hamlet of a Tocav, higher up the glen, and, if possible, still more sequestered than that with the mosque, being completely enveloped by woods and winding streams, at the foot of a lofty and verdant screen of mountains, which, rising abruptly above, separated it from Pchat and the sea-coast. Like many others we visited, it occupied a recess, covered in front by a park of lordly oaks and chesnut trees. The week we spent in this delightful but inglorious retreat, while the thunder of the Russian artillery was reverberated by the hills above, proved very trying to our patience.

With the idea of getting a glance at what was doing beyond, we one day, with considerable difficulty, scaled the walls of our romantic prison, but found, on arriving at the top, that it was only t

first of a series—where “Alps on Alps arise.” Nor did the humours of our eccentric old host contribute to render our confinement more endurable. We had been presented to him by the chiefs, and he had been enjoined to treat us as the governors of the country; but he had no notion, not he, of abdicating his authority to anybody. In addition to some forty cows, and sheep and goats innumerable, he was lord of a couple of serfs, not to mention his own good wife, and a daughter passing fair; and thereupon as much an aristocrat in “his ancient solitary reign” as the Emperor at St. Petersburg. Never did I see such a tyrant.

One evening, our servants, to amuse us, had called in a band of minstrels; and what with a fiddle, (for rude and deficient as the instrument was, and boasting of only two strings, we beheld in it the veritable type of the Cremona itself,) and what with a trio of agreeable voices, singing bass, alto, and tenor, we were presented with a very good specimen, vocal and instrumental, of the national music. In the midst of it, however, our irascible landlord made his appearance, and put an end to the harmony at once, wrathfully intimating to the musicians, as he disbanded them, that “these were not the piping times of peace,” and that, instead of raising a disturbance in the

Neighbourhood, they had much better be fighting for their country and their religion. Our next resource against *ennui* was a game of chess; but when we had, with no little trouble and ingenuity, constructed the pieces and a board, and had sat down with them in battle array, we were again interrupted by our host, who, swelling like a turkey cock, and more indignant than ever, protested against this outlandish sort of gambling under his roof. In short, nothing we did found favour in his sight; it was evident we had been badly educated. What could be more preposterous than our constantly walking to and fro in front of the house without any object at all, instead of sitting quietly in our corners as great men are expected to do. He declared to our dragoman that he was deeply offended by it; so finding it impossible to conciliate him, we abandoned the attempt, and set the old savage at defiance. Still, to reconcile us to our sufferings, we had the society of his daughter, a rustic beauty, who, far from sharing in the unfavourable opinion of her sire, lost no opportunity of evincing her approbation, setting herself off to the best advantage, and assuming her holiday attire during the whole of our stay.

I was at first favoured with an interview, and formally introduced to the harem, but just as the conversation had become entertaining, the old

Marplot, against all rules and regulations in those cases made and provided, thrust his head into the room, and said he thought I had remained there long enough. From that time a prohibition seemed to have been put on our intercourse, which was, nevertheless, evaded by the damsel herself, and many a time did we see her sauntering in the adjoining plantation, apparently in quest of the cattle, when her sylph-like form, braided tresses, and silver-studded bodice, to say nothing of her bewitching smile, transported us in imagination to fairy land.

The conduct of her father in this instance was not only cruel, but clearly unjustifiable; he had no right to put restrictions upon his daughter. The maidens of Circassia are allowed a latitude in their behaviour which is elsewhere unknown; not only do they talk and dance with the other sex, but when they please, they exercise their blandishments to an extent that to a stranger is no less perplexing than agreeable. Guechimaf, however, was a girl of spirit, and properly resented this invasion of her privileges, giving us all to understand that she was ready to elope from the paternal roof with the first of us that chose it, to Stamboul.

Lest the reader should infer from what I have said that the morals of the country are as free and unrestrained as the manners, he will do well to

remember what he who thinks not of wedlock seldom forgets, that the virtue of the lady is guarded by a fine of twenty-five head of cattle; as things go, a pretty efficacious one.

All this flirtation, affording so great a contrast to the reserve established between the sexes in Turkey, is, to the merchants who come from thence, particularly to the Dely Canns (or wild bloods), equally novel and attractive. One of them, our friend Hafiz, compared it to the simplicity of our first parents before the fall; but I am afraid his own experience was but slight, his paradise not altogether so innocent as he flattered himself, nor its roses without their usual accompaniment of thorns. Assuredly, it proves a fool's paradise to many, where they neglect the business that brought them there,

“ To sport with Amaryllis in the shade,
Or with the tangles of Neæra's hair.”

From these, with anything to bestow in the shape of presents, they find it not very easy to extricate themselves. When their stock is exhausted, they are at liberty to go as soon as they please.

I met with an instance of this sort of treatment in the person of a poor half-witted swain from Lazistan, of the name of Husseim, who had a long

and melancholy story to tell, "sighing like furnace" all the while about his merchandize and his mistress. Of the former he had brought a large cargo the year before to Semez, and deposited in the house of an old ouzden, who, like our present Konag Bey, had a very pretty daughter on hand. By her fascinations the heart of the young slave merchant was speedily enslaved—she fairly took captivity captive. Had he been a wise man, he would, under such circumstances, have cut his courtship short, paid down her price, and married her; but a long courtship was more to the taste of the damsel, who contrived to spin it out till his stock of tchivits, aladjas, &c., was so far attenuated in propitiating her, that nothing remained to satisfy (what was still more important) the demands of her sire. Thus was the disconsolate Husseim left without mistress or merchandize, and the account he could render of either was anything but satisfactory; since, however sweet and precious he might have esteemed its items *per contra*, he was conscious they would make but an indifferent figure in a catalogue; such, at least, as was likely to prove intelligible to his partners in trade at Trebizond. He had not even enough to pay his expenses back to Turkey. I gave him, therefore, a free passage in my vessel, and his bitter invectives against the fair sex in general, and the nymphs

of Circassia in particular, afforded me amusement all the way in return.

There lived in a nook of the valley where we now resided a personage who was styled the sultan, but though his rank, the highest in Circassia, entitled him to certain marks of respect, he was, both from the meanness of his character, as well as a suspicion of disloyalty attached to him, since he had spent two years in Russia, very generally despised—a mere cypher in the council and the field. Being our neighbour, however, we had, during our stay at Aboon Bashi, a good deal of his company. He talked much of his family, which, he informed us, was of the same stock as that of Sultan Mahmoud himself; and having little to say on his own account, he expatiated largely on the exploits of his father, the sultan before him, who, to believe all he related of him, must have been a wonderful man indeed—one who thought nothing of putting whole armies single-handed to the rout, or of taking a flying leap on horseback over the Kuban. On his third visit, he brought with him a sort of hammer, mounted on a long stick—the identical one, he assured us, with which his father, the sultan before him, used to slay his enemies with, and which he now generously offered to Mr. Bell as a keepsake. The sacrifice of this heir-loom, though not very great in a material point of view, being

merely a piece of old iron, adorned with two bits of coral, entitled the royal donor to a suitable acknowledgment ; and Mr. Bell, having no relic of similar pretensions to present him with, was fain to give him something of a more vulgar value in return for it, which his highness appeared, however, well satisfied with ; nay, as others maliciously insinuated, had all along been fishing for. Our own opinion of him was far from favourable. Instead of emulating the deeds of his ancestors, which he was constantly bragging about, here he was skulking in a corner, while his countrymen were engaged with the Russians, whose cannon could be heard in his immediate neighbourhood. We were, therefore, somewhat agreeably surprised on receiving information one morning that, without saying a word to anybody, he had set out with his squire to the theatre of the war ; but our pleasure and surprise were of short duration, and I began to be seriously alarmed on my own account, when I learnt, what was generally reported and believed, that the salt and the merchandize I had brought with me were about to be distributed to all who bravely took the field against the Russians. It was in consequence of this report that the sultan, taking with him, in addition to his usual accoutrements, two large empty sacks, was now in full march to Pchat.

The suspense in which I was placed by these accounts was at length relieved by the arrival of my Greek servant, Demetry, from whom we received positive intelligence on this and other matters not less interesting to us. It was now more than three weeks since, at Adhencum, I put him jointly in charge of my property at Pchat with Imam Oli Hadji, whose honesty, however useful his experience might prove in the sale of these goods, seemed already more than problematical. My suspicions were well justified by the sequel; and but for the check I had placed on him, the merchandize would have been entirely lost. Contrary to my instructions, he had been purchasing slaves—a blooming damsel for me, and, though I knew the rogue to have no funds, and must have been appropriating mine, two children for himself. Besides objecting, on principle, to these sort of returns, I was aware they were such as a Frank could not legally dispose of at Constantinople, and of which my crafty agent knew he would himself have the absolute command on his arrival there. My Greek had done what he could to oppose this chicanery; but the Hadji, to defeat him and obtain the entire command of the property, had intimated to his countrymen, that not only he had no right over it, but that the Bey himself (meaning me) was not its real owner.

These mysterious hints of the Hadji had immediately confirmed the Circassians in their original surmises, that the goods were intended as presents to themselves from Sultan Mahmoud or King William: a council had been held on the subject, but the decision it had come to was, that nothing could be done with the merchandize without my sanction. My Greek had also manfully asserted the authority with which I had invested him, and which he offered to maintain in single combat against anybody who should dispute it. There was, however, not the least necessity for violence; the Circassians were disposed to do justice to all parties; and their conduct in this instance, and subsequently, when the invasion of Pchat by the Russians had thrown everything into confusion and tumult, was beyond all praise. It is on occasions like these, and in the general wreck of their property, that, in the most civilized countries, the people recklessly abandon themselves to pillage; but I found, notwithstanding the doubts that existed as to the destination of the merchandize, and though, on the advances of the Russians, it had frequently to be removed in arabas, not an article was plundered. The most remarkable feature in the affair was, that the Konag Bey in whose hands it was left was personally a knave, but he knew well enough that if he robbed me, he would not

only have to make restitution, but would also be heavily fined.

These are circumstances well worthy of attention ; and before I proceed with my narrative, and take the reader back with me once more to Pchat, and the head quarters of the Circassians, which this occurrence had determined me to visit, he will perhaps, not only for the elucidation of these matters, but for the sake of the inquiry itself, one of considerable interest, deem it not irrelevant to the subject if I devote the next chapter to an examination of the institutions, social and judicial, of Circassia.

CHAPTER XL

Account of the institutions of the Circassians—Pshees or princes
—Ouzdens or nobles—Tokums or tribes—Illustrations of
their judicial institutions.

THE circumstance which of all others is calculated to surprise the stranger in the Caucasus is, the general security of life and property. His imagination, as he wanders through its narrow defiles and gloomy forests, “a boundless contiguity of shade,” would naturally people the whole with banditti, and present to him the lurking brigand at every turn and obscuration of the road. A journey of a few weeks will undeceive him; having obtained a domicile, and the name of his host, or konag, for a passport, he will encounter little danger, and meet with a cheerful welcome

wherever he goes, travelling through the wilds of Circassia as unconcerned as over the most frequented thoroughfare of Europe; and if of an adventurous disposition, disappointed that he is neither attacked, circumvented, nor waylaid. But though a twelvemonth's experience of the country has confirmed me in this opinion of it, I must at the same time admit that there are exceptions to be made, and that, in some districts of it, the character of the people is more in keeping with its natural wildness, and that the spirit of enterprise, though checked and regulated by the national institutions, is nowhere entirely suppressed by them. Still their influence, on the whole, is most salutary, and as (except in a few letters which I addressed to the newspapers during my stay there, no attempt has hitherto been made to describe them,) they wholly differ from those which exist in any other part of the world, I flatter myself that the present inquiry will not prove uninteresting to the reader.

It may appear extraordinary that no writers considered as authorities in this country, such as Pallas, Klaproth, or Marigny, should have made any mention of these fundamental laws. But the fact is, the two former were never in Circassia at all, and the last, who was only there for a few days, and who certainly availed himself admirably

of his opportunities, could have had little time to ascertain their existence, and less to comprehend their bearing and operation.

The conclusion at which all these writers have arrived, and which anybody labouring under similar disadvantages would come to when informed that there were princes and nobles in the land, is, that the peace and order established there must be owing to their administration. The inference would, however, be altogether unfounded. I have already demonstrated that, in the three provinces now at war with Russia, the authority of the Pshees, or princes, is either for good or for evil actually null; and where it still prevails, is rather, as it was in the middle ages, when uncontrolled by crown or crosier, an element of turbulence than security. Their authority, founded, like that of our feudal aristocracy, on enterprise, can, in a mountainous region, unfavourable to tyranny in any shape, be maintained by it alone, and is speedily dissolved by inaction.

As far back as the days of Justinian, we find, in the descriptions of Procopius, the same disorders and the same revolutions taking place. The princes, he tells us, were constantly seizing on the children of the country—then, as at present, its chief riches—to supply the Byzantine slave-

market; but the people at length rose and put an end to these abuses. How well the picture he draws of these princes corresponds with that of the Pshees of the present day! A Dely Cann, one of the ardent and restless spirits that abound here, was one day regretting to me the extinction of their power in Natukvitch, such as it yet existed in Zadoog, and whose nature a few words sufficed to explain to me.

The will of the Pshee is a law to his followers; they do his bidding, whatever it may be; wherever he presents his rifle, a hundred are presented in the same direction; and the booty he collects in his wars is the reward of their fidelity. These petty suzerains appear to have been originally of Cabardian descent, and to have carried their arms to every part of Circassia. Their object certainly appears to have been anything but the introduction of order and tranquillity where they came; and it would have been extraordinary indeed if rapacity and insolence had produced such fruits. To them, rather, the Caucasus owes its bad name; the prisoners made in their wars have established a servile class in the country; and the slaves, whose beauty, in ancient and modern times, brought so high a price at Constantinople, have been at once the provocatives and the victims to their depredations. It must not be supposed, on

the other hand, whatever the inherent vices of such a system, that they were not veiled, and in some measure redeemed, by an exterior of bravery, generosity, and courtesy; even to this day we trace in the manners of those chieftains observances so analogous to the prescriptions of the code of chivalry, that Pallas does not hesitate to affirm that the Cabardians were originally a colony of Teutonic Knights. In the plains and the provinces of the Kuban, where there are large and flourishing villages, the authority of these Pshees being easily preserved, is more permanent, and acquires, in consequence, a more peaceful and patriarchal character.

The authority of the second class, the Vork, Ouzden, or noble, seems to have contributed as little to national prosperity as that of the Pshees. In wealth and power they are no way paramount to the Tocavs, Tlokothfles, or freemen; they are tenacious, it is true, of their dignity, and never mingle their blood by marriage with the Tlokothfles; but the latter, without seeking to contaminate it by an admixture, have rendered it really no better, by refusing a greater compensation for it than is given for their own; so that, divested of this last privilege, their order can only be considered in the light of a superior caste. To secure the blessings of peace and liberty, other protection

was necessary to the Circassians, and they have long since obtained them from institutions which, though unknown to the rest of the world, are in vigorous operation among them.

As in Europe, under the feudal system, men of peaceful disposition and pursuits were incorporated into burghs and townships, with a view to their common safety, so the mountaineers, against the violence of military chiefs, have sought defence in voluntary associations; different, it is true, but as effective, and more adapted to their mode of life and the genius of the country; associations which do not withdraw them from their fields and pastures to immure them within the walls of a city, or even confine them to a particular locality, but whose sole bond of union is an oath, imposing, in the absence of all other ties, obligations of a most sacred character. The members of these communities all regard each other as brothers, and, to strengthen the illusion of their being such, their families are not allowed to intermarry; a regulation so rigidly observed, that even where the society is composed of many thousands, as in the case of the powerful one of Natquo, it still holds good, and a marriage between two individuals of it is looked upon as incestuous. In conformity also with this idea, the married women, who, since the introduction of Islamism, have as-

sumed the veil, do not hesitate to uncover themselves before any man of their own tribe, though frequently, from residing in a different part of the country, he may be a total stranger to them.

Thus, composing but one family, the members of a society are bound to afford each other succour and support, and if any one of their body be slain, to exact satisfaction for his death from the tribe of the homicide, every individual of which, no less than the offender himself, becoming responsible for it, and till it be given, remaining at feud with them. The fine established for manslaughter is, for males, two hundred oxen, and one hundred for females. Every society thus incurring the responsibility of their crimes, claims the exclusive right of punishing its own members. Whatever the offence—be it murder, theft, abduction, &c.—they may be charged with, there are penalties established for them all; and the claims are adjusted by a jury of twelve persons, six from each of the litigant societies: their verdict must be unanimous. The penalty, when it has been arranged, is not paid by the criminal, neither is it received by the injured party; it is contributed by, and distributed among, their respective societies.

The effect of these laws is in every way beneficial, in a preventive point of view as well as

retributive. In the commission of a crime, every individual is aware that it is not only against the party immediately injured he offends, but against his own society, who are all involved in its consequences, and to whom alone he is answerable for it. Revenge, on the other hand, is disarmed by the reflection that it deprives a whole society of its claim to indemnity, the exaction of which will more effectually answer its purpose, by drawing on the head of the enemy the displeasure of all his tribe. The principle here is the same as in the jurisprudence of civilized states, which makes every man responsible for his crimes to society at large; but it must be more effective when, instead of being a stranger to him, every member of that society is a brother, whose interests are immediately compromised by his offence.

The influence on the national character, where the redress of an individual's wrong devolves on the society to which he belongs, is palpable enough; their motives in seeking it are no longer founded on passion, but interest. It is true that, till satisfaction has been accorded and differences settled, the tribes are at feud with each other, and should any of their members meet in the interior, he of the aggrieved society is bound to take revenge and slay his adversary; such a summary mode of proceeding would, however, prove any-

thing but satisfactory to his own society, it being one by which they would forfeit their right to compensation, and which they would only resort to when they despaired of obtaining it. It is curious, therefore, to observe how studiously the members of societies who are at feud avoid meeting each other. The precautions and evasions they make use of for this purpose, which would in a private quarrel be considered cowardly, become, when the interests of their society are concerned, both politic and commendable.

I remember, on one occasion, going to a wedding in company with Schimaf Bey. On arriving on the ground, we were met by a person who warned him of the presence of an adversary. In consequence of this intimation, he begged us to excuse him, and remained behind. But he of the hostile tribe, being informed of the circumstance, both out of courtesy to us and deference to the prince's rank, (in spite of which, had they met, he must have fired at him,) withdrew. It has also frequently happened that we have been travelling with persons who, on being apprized that people with whom they were at feud were coming by the same road, have made a circuit to avoid them.

It rarely occurs that there is a positive denial of justice, though, from the ambiguity of the case, or the poverty of the society, there may be a delay

of it. In this case, measures are adopted to accelerate a settlement—fences are destroyed, cattle purloined, slaves kidnapped, &c.; and if these hints are not taken, violence of a more open and decided nature is resorted to—heads are broken, and wounds inflicted, but all with a due regard to the final reckoning, and so as to leave a balance of injury in favour of the assailants.

Such are the societies of Circassia; formed, it is evident, not for warlike or political, but for social and judicial purposes. In this respect they entirely differ from the clans or tribes of other mountainous regions, who, living together, and united under a chieftain, are the ready instruments of his ambition; whereas, the members of the different Circassian societies live apart from each other, and acknowledge no leader. When a gathering takes place for an expedition or foray, the banners under which the various bands are arrayed are not those of the tribes, but of the particular districts or streams where the warriors reside. The nobles, instead of being the heads of them, as some writers imagine, have their own societies as well as the freemen; all originally distinct, though sometimes connected by an oath. This sort of alliance is not uncommon; the society of nobles called Chipaquo is united to the powerful one of Tocavs, named Natquo, and from this

connexion has acquired the ascendancy it enjoys in Natukvitch. It was a similar alliance with the Tocav society of Rubleh that formerly gave the Abbats the same degree of influence in Shapsook.

The advantages enjoyed by the member of a rich and powerful society, and the disadvantage under which an individual labours who has the misfortune to belong to a poor and weak one, are such as no personal qualities can neutralize or make up for. Every man feels that for the payment or exaction of fines the resources of his society are his own, and in proportion to these is he respected by his neighbours. Nor is this all; agreeably with the liberal ideas that prevail here generally with respect to property, and which know hardly of any bounds among the members of a society, a man has a claim upon it for anything he may stand in need of. For example, if in want of a wife, and too poor to buy one, for they are very expensive articles, his society raise a subscription for him. The wives of the members, however strictly they appropriate them during their lives, revert when they die to the joint-stock company, who dispose of them as they think proper. This is one out of the many particulars in which the Circassian law is at variance with that of the Koran, which gives every wife, although originally a slave, her liberty, be-

ing after her husband's death her own mistress, and free to choose another.

In everything that relates to their laws and their administration, the Circassians still look to their societies; nor will they permit Islamism, whatever their respect for its pretensions, to dictate the one or usurp the other. They allow its representatives, it is true, a seat in their tribunals. But the Cadi, who presides over, or is called in rather as assessor to their juries, exercises little control, but merely expounds the Mussulman law, which they adopt or reject as it suits their ideas and customs. It has been shewn in another place that the principles on which it proceeds are essentially different to those which govern the code of the societies. With them no action is, *per se*, positively good or evil, but is rendered so by circumstances; theft or homicide, where retaliation is necessary, may become not only justifiable, but a duty; nor could the system work if this were not a recognised principle, it being always the *ultima ratio* by which justice is to be obtained here. To whatever extent, therefore, Islamism may prevail in its religious character, and as regards its rights and observances, it is still, in its administrative capacity, little more than a dead letter, and must remain such till clothed with an authority paramount to that of the societies. The

establishment, on the other hand, of a supreme power would be completely incompatible with their institutions; and when the Circassians talk of it themselves, they have not the least notion that it would interfere with them; the change having been suggested to them, not by their domestic necessities, but by the hostile pressure from without. They are warmly attached to them; and as every individual in the country feels his weight and share in their operation, his prejudice in favour of them has grown with his growth, and strengthened with his strength. And yet to obtain the advantages of a military and political organization they must submit to a government, and this would on the outset come into collision with the societies, as they would naturally object to transfer the control and punishment of their members to others, wherever they might be. Could this difficulty be got over, the societies, or rather the ruins of them, would present good materials for the construction of a government. They are already in the habit of collecting property, and of equally distributing burdens for the payment of fines, and there is little doubt that the same machinery would serve for the collection of a revenue, while the statistical information possessed by every society as to its own body might also be profitably turned to account.

I have already remarked, and to the reader who wishes to form a just idea of the state of Circassia it cannot be too often repeated, that the feature which distinguishes its tribes from those of every other country in the world is, that their members have no other bond of union but an oath confirmed by the daily experience of its advantages, and that they are dispersed over their provinces promiscuously with the members of other tribes. The causes of this segregation I do not pretend to explain at full; there are two, however, sufficiently obvious. The members of a tribe, no matter of how many families it may be composed,—and in some instances, as I have observed, there are many thousands,—are not allowed to intermarry, a regulation which would prove highly embarrassing were they all resident in one district. Another reason which may induce them to separate is, that it is much easier to obtain justice from members of a different tribe than among themselves, there not existing the same combination to enforce it. We shall understand this better when we remember that near relations make but indifferent neighbours, and that a tribe in Circassia is but a large family, whose disputes it would be the more difficult to arrange, that they acknowledge no head among themselves, and are therefore the better friends the more they live asunder. But whatever

may be the causes of their separation, the effect of it is to render them useless for warlike or national purposes. For military organization, local influences, as I have shewn, are of much more avail; and in the council as well as in the field their power (whose elements are social and judicial) is unfelt, while that of the princes and nobles, being of a military and feudal origin, has still its weight, though personal merit and qualification have even a still greater sway.

We have lastly to consider the tendency of these institutions in a moral point of view, which, after the admission I have made that theft and homicide are justifiable under them, may appear very questionable. But before we condemn them entirely on that account, it would be well to remember that the very same things are sanctioned by the practice of the most civilized nations, and that in war we plunder and kill with much less remorse, and on a much larger scale, than the Circassians. They also only do these things when at war, or at feud, which is the same thing. The difference, however, consists in this—that in the domestic affairs of the former, the government takes the administration of justice and the power of punishment exclusively upon itself; and there no longer existing any necessity for the exercise of violence or craft among individuals, religion is invited to

pronounce them positively wrong. These dictates of religion are lost sight of, however, in the external relations of a country.

Circassia, as I have explained, is composed of many independent communities, commingling, yet preserving each its identity for the sake of mutual protection; a state of things which introduces hostile as well as friendly relations among the whole population, putting arms into every man's hands for the administration of justice, and therefore incompatible with the doctrine of positive good or evil. It is on this account that the Circassians are yet but indifferent disciples of Islamism.

There can be no doubt, in the meanwhile, that these mixed relations of society lead to a development, moral and intellectual, in the people at large, vastly superior to that which is obtained by modern civilization. It is only by contrast and comparison that the value of different objects is duly estimated; and here every man is constituted into an arbiter—his feelings are quickened, his judgment improved by exercise. Of knowledge, the result of studies, there is of course little or nothing here; but of "wisdom," as Bacon says, "existing without them, and above them, and won by observation," there is a great deal. It is, in short, the high cultivation of this faculty that invariably raises the Circassian, to whatever soil he may be trans-

planted, to the highest stations of power and dignity that can be found there.

To conclude with the observations I started with; the result of these apparently conflicting elements of the social system is a harmony by no means contemptible; and in a country where a rifle, a pistol, and a dagger form indispensable articles of every man's costume, and he feels all the pride and independence they are calculated to invest him with, such is the tranquillizing effect superinduced by his social responsibility, that in no country in the world is the demeanour of the people more sober and dignified; and in none can the stranger, after identifying himself with one of its tribes,—a privilege he obtains by becoming the guest of a member of it, who is answerable for him to the rest,—travel with greater security. During the whole of our residence there I heard but of one murder, and as the circumstances attending it will aptly illustrate the system I have attempted to describe, I shall, though they occurred only a few months before I left Circassia, relate them here.

One fine morning last spring, accompanied by Osman, my faithful squire, I took a ride from Semez over the mountains to the house of Mehemet Hadji Oli, the judge at Butchedjik, a distance of about three hours. On my arrival at this pleasant hermitage, I was ushered into the guest-house,

and told that his worship was then engaged at a council, which was being held somewhere in the neighbourhood, for the purpose of ridding it of some very bad characters, who had long infested it with their depredations. The good folks on hearing that I had come, despatched a messenger, begging that I would excuse the absence of the judge till the evening, as it was most important that the affair which then occupied their attention should be brought to an issue, and in the meanwhile, to keep up my spirits, dainties and refreshments of all sorts, followed by an enormous ox marching into the court-yard for our supper, poured in from all sides. At length the judge himself made his appearance, attended by some of the principal tamatas of the district. In explaining to me the cause of his detention, he entered into particulars with regard to the case they had been investigating. For several months past, he told me, so many sheep and horses had been stolen, that a stricter watch had been instituted, which had eventually led to the detection of the robbers—three brothers, long suspected of being such by their neighbours.

A competent number of their own tribe having come to assist at the trial, it commenced in the usual way, that is, by the administration of an oath upon the Koran to the accused. The nature

and effect of such an oath, which may appear almost miraculous, I shall advert to in another place. Certainly, the rack itself could not have elicited a fuller confession than it did on this occasion. To the deep dismay and confusion of their clansmen, they detailed a series of robberies committed by them in every part of the province, the penalties attending which would have the effect of reducing, not only themselves, but all connected with them, to beggary. The proceedings had, in consequence, assumed a very serious and painful character, and, presenting great difficulties to a settlement, had been adjourned till the next day. The judge, who never lost an opportunity of extolling the law of the Koran to the disparagement of that of the societies, was for applying it directly to the offenders, and punishing them without reference to anything but their crimes. In support of his views, he appealed to me if the law of England was not in accordance with them.

But though the Circassians seemed much edified to hear that thieves found such little favour with us, in England, they persisted in thinking their customs the best—" *Nolumus leges Circassiæ mutare,*" they said, and stuck to their fines and responsibilities. It was a relief therefore to all parties when they learned, the next morning, that the delinquents had flown, and escaped into Russia,

taking the direction of the Kuban during the night ; an event which greatly tended to facilitate a composition for their felonies with their tribe. I concluded the business was all over, and returned the same morning with Osman to Semez. Our way was, for the most part, through a narrow gorge in the mountains that divided our valley from that of Sooka. We were descending into this by the stony track of a torrent buried completely in thicket, when, all at once, Osman, who was behind, rode briskly past me, and then pulling up his horse, shouted, "*Was haf shee.*" The salutation was answered by a man who sprang up from the bushes, where he had been lying *perdu* almost beneath our horses' feet.

Never, in human shape, did I see anything more squalid and savage than the figure that stood before us. What with his grizzly beard and mustachios, the loose wool of his calpac, and the bristles on his brawny chest, (for he had no other covering than his ragged, open-breasted tunic,) he formed truly a very shaggy specimen of our species. Though otherwise unarmed, the hairy monster grasped in his right hand a hatchet, which, with the fierce expression of eyes rolling upon us, made it at first doubtful if he intended to give us battle or not. After a moment's hesitation,

however, he turned away from us, and rushed into the adjoining brake.

Osman shook his head as he disappeared, and said, "That fellow could have been here for no good; there may be more of them, Bey; so let us make the best of our way home." We, accordingly quickened our pace, and about an hour's distance further on we fell in with a party of horsemen coming from Semez, who turned back and accompanied us more than a mile on our way; a compliment always paid to distinguished guests in this country, and which Osman now thought appropriate. From them we learned that, the night before, there had been a murder committed in the immediate neighbourhood of our house, and that the murderer was known to be one of the individuals who had been the day before on his trial before the council at Sooka. It instantly occurred to us that the ruffian we had just encountered must be the man in question, and I desired Osman to give a description of him to our companions, that they might take measures for his immediate apprehension, which, as they were well mounted and armed, I thought might be easily effected by them. But they merely replied, that they could give the necessary information to some of his own tribe, declining themselves to meddle

with him, (a behaviour which, at that time, appeared to me quite incomprehensible,) and having escorted us to the brow of the hill that overlooks our valley, they took their leave, and proceeded on their journey.

The scene which presented itself to me on looking down into these my familiar haunts was no less novel than impressive. The cemetery on one side of the shrubbery by which our house was enveloped, consisting of several rude heaps of stone, each of them with a stake at the head and the foot, and through which I was accustomed to take my solitary stroll in the evenings, was now crowded by the matrons of Semez. They had been assembled by the mother of the murdered youth, to join with her in the lamentations over the grave to which he had just been consigned. The clamour they raised, if not the result of genuine tribulation, was, at least, an affecting imitation of it. Though confined to the single ejaculation of "Wai! Wai! Wai!" it was far from monotonous; at times, sinking into a low, stifled wail—then repeated with plaintive iteration, not unlike the bleating of so many ewes—then swelling, till the valley resounded with it, into a burst of passionate and uncontrollable sorrow.

The road to our habitation lay through this cemetery, but, not to disturb the funeral rites, we

reached it by a *detour* behind. I was furnished on my arrival with further particulars. It appeared that the three brothers whose misconduct had been attended with such ruinous consequences to their tribe, had determined, in order to avoid their reproaches and just indignation, to escape into Russia. Their arms and their horses had previously been taken from them all; but two contrived to steal horses, and the third had been left behind, and had proceeded on foot to Semez. About midnight he had come to our dwelling, in which, during my absence, the son of our host and a servant were sleeping.

Awakened by the noise of somebody forcing open the door, the inmates perceived, by the light of the embers, a man, who, thrusting in his head, demanded if the Inglis Beyzadi were not within. On being told that I had not returned that evening, he hastily made his retreat. What could have been the object of this unseasonable visit I never clearly understood; but, coupling it with our adventure in the wood, I think it must have been his intention to assassinate me. The Russians had laid a heavy price upon our heads, and it seemed probable that, having made up his mind to go over to them, he thought he might in this manner secure the reward and a good reception; but disappointed at not finding me there, he had pro-

ceeded to the cottage of a poor man at a few hundred yards distance, and had asked for a night's lodging. The master of the house happened to be from home; but the good woman, pitying his apparent exhaustion, shewed him into the guest-house, and not only provided him with a bed, but, assisted by her two boys, set about preparing him a supper. She was in the act of boiling some pasta for him, when, irresistibly impelled to bloodshed, he aimed a blow at her with his hatchet. She contrived, however, to escape unhurt into the woods; but her two boys were not so fortunate; one of them was felled to the earth, with a fearful gash on the shoulder, and the other was killed outright.

After thus requiting the hospitality he had experienced, the miscreant betook himself to the mountains, where we had met him. He was subsequently seen by an old Anapalu, Emin Ugha, who was accosted by him on the same road. He inquired of Emin "what were the news at Sooka?" and was edging towards him with the design of seizing his weapons, when the other, who was on his guard, and a brave man, having formerly served as Beiraktar at Anapa, presented his pistol at him—"Avaunt, murderer!" he cried; "you have imbrued your hands in innocent blood already; do you seek another victim?" Upon

this he cried, "*Ogmaf! Ogmaf!*" (good-bye, good-bye,) and retreated into the woods.

On hearing this story, I asked of Emin why he had not shot the man, knowing him to be a murderer. "God forbid," he replied; "I should have involved myself and my connexions in a feud with his tribe. Besides, the boy he has murdered does not belong to my tribe; and if he did, we should prefer the penalty of two hundred oxen to the villain's life, which his own clansmen will, no doubt, take care to shorten for him, since they have found it so detrimental to them." These proved to be exactly the views of the parties concerned, who declined the offer that was made to them by the tribe of the murderer, to have him brought to them bound hand and foot, and insisted on the penalty. The consequence was, that the fugitive during these negotiations was allowed to wander unmolested, everybody shunning him as they would a pestilence, not so much from fear, as to avoid embroiling themselves with his tribe. Finally, the latter, that he might not compromise them by further mischief, surrounded the mountains where he had taken refuge, and succeeded in laying hands upon him. Then, having been sentenced to death by their elders, they took him to the sea-side, fastened some heavy stones to him, and hurled him from the rocks.

CHAPTER XII.

Our departure from Aboon Bashi—Skirmishes with the Russians—Regard of the Circassians for their dead, and their respect for the property of strangers—Indar Oglu and the council—The Wolf.

MANY of the chiefs having learnt we were proceeding to Pchat, had come to escort us thither, and we left Aboon Bashi towards the middle of June. Our crabbed old host seemed softened into something like civility at parting with us; and the smiles of Guerchimaï, who had come to the door of the harem to take a last peep at us, seemed to be struggling with her tears. Her visions of splendour and of Stamboul were about to disappear with those who had raised them, and even the gifts we had sent her were held unconsciously in her hand as she saw the donors depart.

The road up the mountains was steep and difficult, and it took our horses a long time to scramble through the woods to the top. The clouds were resting on it as we arrived; but the wind having suddenly risen, the whole drifted away, rolling down the valleys, and unveiling, with a very grand effect, the landscape at our feet. Unlike that we had ascended, the further side of the mountains consisted of a gradation of bold platforms, or table land, their sides covered with forests, but the tops well cleared, and affording excellent pasture for cattle. Troops of horses turned out to grass were also ranging in every direction. Evening was closing upon us as we once more reached the valley of Pchat, and it being yet a few hours' ride from the Circassian camp, Osman found us a lodging for the night. Indeed, however lonely and unpromising the place might appear, we were never at a loss for one, having only to intimate our wish for it, when our guides would immediately discover a house for us.

Not far from our konag of that night we discovered a manufactory of powder; the machinery consisted chiefly of a large mortar, in which the different ingredients were pounded. The pestle was suspended to a long and rude lever, not unlike that of the pumps we find in some parts of Germany. The sulphur is all imported from

Turkey; for though there are mines in the country, they have not the least idea of working them. Nitre they obtain from a shrub, which is found all over the country, but which I am not botanist enough to classify; it blazes when ignited, like touch-paper. Powder is, of course, made here in small quantities, and is distributed as *bakshish*, or gratuity.

The next morning we continued our route, and we had presently indubitable evidence, in the rattle of small arms, mingled every now and then with the heavy roar of artillery, that our friends were engaged with the Russians, and that we were close upon the scene of action. We accordingly pushed on at full gallop through the interminable avenues of trees that concealed them from us, in hopes of seeing something of the conflict; but we came too late: the Russians had just sallied out on a foraging excursion; but finding the field too hot for them, and the Circassians, like an invaded nest of hornets, everywhere on the alert, they were now hastily retreating to their entrenchments again. The last battalions, with whom a running fight was kept up from the banks of the Pchat, were folded from our view by its windings as we arrived.

Notice having been forwarded of our approach, we were met by a guard of honour, who escorted us to the Circassian head-quarters. They were

scarcely at the distance of three miles from those of the Russian general, and appeared certainly far more picturesque than comfortable. The council-ring, over which Haud Oglu Mansour Bey appeared to preside, was seated on the grass, under a spreading tree. It was engaged with the case of a spy who had been detected and seized in the act of escaping into Anapa. The deliberations had been interrupted by the sortie of the Russians; but, it having been repelled, they were now resuming them as quietly as if nothing had happened, and yet the morning had proved an eventful, and to many a fatal one. They were joined at every instant, by chiefs returning from the fray; others, begrimed with smoke and dust, were performing their ablutions in the stream, while parties were engaged in carrying away the dead and wounded, equally the objects of their solicitude.

There is no trait in the Circassian character more deserving of admiration than their tenderness to the dead—the poor relics of mortality that are unconscious of it. If one of their countrymen fall in battle, numbers rush to the spot, that they may carry off the body, and the heroic struggle that ensues, as common an incident in Circassian battles as in other times on the plains of Troy, involves frequently the most disastrous consequences. The Russians have endeavoured to turn

this feeling to account, and their soldiers have been ordered to mutilate the corpses of the enemy, that it may be still further available. But it may be questioned if such measures, so congenial to the taste of a Zass or a Willemineff, be more consistent with sound policy than humanity itself, or if the momentary advantages to be derived from them can at all compensate for the feelings of execration kindled against the authors of them throughout the Caucasus. One of the litters, with a corpse on it, happening to pass where the council was seated, they rose, and Mansour beckoned to the bearers to set it down.

The winding sheet, as it was gradually unrolled, displayed the handsome and beardless face, the slight and graceful limbs, of a youth of sixteen, and on being further unswathed, the lower part of his body was seen frightfully lacerated with grape shot. It seemed he was not quite dead; for his eyelids were slightly quivering, though his closed lips and placid countenance shewed him to be insensible to pain. The single lock of hair, long, black, and glossy, flowing from his Mussulman scalp, was another proof of his youthfulness, a melancholy ornament to the bier on which his gallantry had prematurely extended him. The most rugged of the veterans now collected round it were touched with commiseration. "It is all over

with him," said Mansour. "Take him to the maidens of his district, poor lad, that he may be decently buried. I answer there will be wailing enough over him."

We were now invited to take our seats in the council-ring, in which I beheld many faces that were familiar to me—Keri Oglu, Khass Demir, the Prince of Wana, and others. We were very cordially received; and on representing the danger to which I thought my property was exposed, Haud Oglu undertook, for the rest of the assembly, to give me every security for it. "The person and the property of the guest," said he, "have ever been held sacred in this country, and will continue to be so. We have a proverb which says, 'It is Allah who builds a nest for the stranger bird,' and we should be the last, professing to be true believers, to dispute such an ordinance. You behold us reduced to great extremity, but, God be thanked, we are still honest men and good Mus-sulmen. Why otherwise do we now endure every privation and hardship, when the gold of the Mus-covite would, if we sacrificed our consciences, enable us to live in peace and luxury."

It happened singularly enough that when Mansour was expatiating on his countrymen's integrity, they should be joined by a chief who was generally suspected of corruption and secret intelligence

with the Russians. He rode up to the assembly, attended by a single follower. From the ease with which he alighted from his saddle, as well as the change in his dress, now consisting of the coarse wrapper of the Circassian warrior, we had some difficulty in recognising our friend of a hundred winters, Indar Oglu. When we had last seen him, he appeared to be an infirm old man, comfortably clad, and surrounded by domestics. But the stirring times that had supervened seemed to have revived the energies of his youth. On the approach of the Russians, he had flung aside his staff, mounted his horse, and taken the field at the head of his retainers ; but having found his unaided efforts of no avail, he was then engaged in superintending the removal of his household, and his flocks and herds, to the mountains. The proofs he had lately given of devotion to the cause of his country had, it seems, emboldened him to resume his long-vacated seat in its councils, or perhaps, as they were now held in his immediate neighbourhood, he deemed it inconsistent with his safety and his dignity to absent himself. Be this as it may, his experiment was an unfortunate one.

On his first appearance, conformably with the respect that is invariably shewn to age, the whole assembly got up and saluted him ; but the silence and constraint which his presence subsequently

imposed, the freezing looks by which the old ouzden's glance, as it wandered round the assembly, was met, must have painfully convinced him that he was regarded as an alien and intruder, if not a very Cataline, in this little senate of Circassians. To leave him no doubt on the subject, they presently rose in a body, and, having withdrawn to some distance, proceeded with their discussions. This intentional slight was a sharp trial to his feelings: his cup of bitterness had been recently filled to the brim by the invasion of the Russians; there wanted but this last drop to make it overflow. We endeavoured to soothe him by all the polite attentions in our power, but the heart of the old man was too full to listen to us; he wrung our hands, mounted his horse, and, having struck into the neighbouring copse, might soon after be seen wading over a distant ford of the Pchat.

The reader will no doubt think it highly creditable to Indar Oglu, after the scene I have described, that his patriotism was proof against the temptations that were now held out to him by the Russian general. Overtures had been made to him by Tausch, the German agent who formerly resided with him, and who was then acting as guide to the army, but they were sturdily rejected by him. In the general conflagration of the houses of Pchat, Mehemet's had been spared—a very invidious com-

pliment, which he could well have dispensed with. To prove he had not sought it, he himself destroyed his habitation, and retired, with the rest of the people, to the mountains. In truth, he had need at this time of all his firmness and circumspection to allay the jealousy and suspicion with which he was universally regarded. His sons, particularly Nogai, were the foremost in every skirmish, and lost no opportunity of displaying their friendship to the Russians by the havoc they made in their ranks. Djanboulat, Nogai's eldest son, was killed during the course of the campaign; he was a young warrior of great promise, and, during the time I allude to, attended us assiduously in our peregrinations. The very tattered condition of our youthful squire's wardrobe had attracted my attention, and I was surprised to hear he was an Indar Oglu; but the whole family, I found, had thought it prudent to travestie themselves in the same fashion, it being a sort of practical refutation of the reports that had prevailed, that they had been enriched by their intercourse with the Russians. Mehemet Indar Oglu was not the only chief by a great many who had incurred the suspicion, and who was then under the jealous surveillance, of his countrymen.

The means by which they, for the most part, had become suspected was, by frequenting the

neutral province of Zadooz, between which and Russia there had long existed commercial relations; but the people of Shapsook and Natukvitch having strictly interdicted all direct communication with the enemy, the disaffected, or rather the corrupt, still found a door open in Zadooz; and many, under pretence of visiting their friends, or of trading there, were known to have extended their rambles into Russia. Among those was a young noble, whose acquaintance we made about this time; one, however, whose offences in this way had been atoned for by such noble intrepidity in the field, and such a lavish spirit of generosity to his friends—virtues the most esteemed in Circassia,—that they had been in a great measure overlooked there. He had, moreover, bound himself by an oath on the Koran to discontinue these practices. But of what avail were such bonds to the roving and adventurous spirit of a Tongouse? He had formed at Ekaterinodar a friendship with a young French officer in the Russian service, as romantic, if not quite as disinterested, as that which united the Paladins, or the Damons and Pythiases of yore. The liberality of his friend not only excited his admiration, but supplied him with the means of indulging in similar profusion.

The exact nature of the services by which his

kindness was to be repaid was never ascertained; it seems, however, that Tongouse had neglected to perform them. Some spies, who had been seized and tried before the council, had deposed that they had been instructed by the officer in question to remind him of certain promises he had made at Ekaterinodar, but which seemed to have escaped his memory; but these imputations he had treated with disdain, and, as far as he could refute them with his sword and rifle—the only arguments he condescended to wield—they were certainly non proven. The wounds he could shew (not to mention some curious ones he could not shew) were also convincing evidence of his patriotism.

In short, Tchorook Oglu Tongouse, or “the Wolf,” was a good model of the Circassian *preur chevalier*, altogether *sans peur*, if not *sans reproche*. Whatever enterprise was in hand, were it foray, onslaught, or ambuscade, he for one might be depended upon; if wrongs were to be redressed—individual, provincial, or national—Tongouse was invariably the champion. When certain of the Caucasian provinces had made separate terms with Russia, he was the first, by his successful inroads, to make them repent of their apostasy. His name had spread even as far as the Ingouches, whose children “the Wolf” had more than once carried off from them. Such celebrity in a man yet scarcely

in his prime had produced its natural effects on the ladies of the Caucasus, and he had more claims on his heart than even the Mahomedan dispensation, indulgent as it is, could allow him to do justice to. The consequence was, that his decided disposition to please led him into many scrapes, and the fines he had drawn on himself and his tribe would, if they had all been duly paid, have stocked half the estates in Natukvitch with horned cattle.

The only remedy for these disorders was, that he should take to himself a wife or two; and as the ample patrimony he inherited no longer sufficed for it, the purchase money was cheerfully, and from motives of economy, contributed by his tribe. He accordingly married two wives. The first, the most beautiful, and the second, the most accomplished woman in Circassia. His success in the courtship of the former created no surprise. Beauty and bravery have mutual attractions all the world over; the one being held to be the legitimate meed of the other. But that Guavcha, the discreet and stately daughter of Indar Oglu, should throw herself away on such a scapegrace as Tongouse did excite the special wonder and the no small indignation of her tribe and family. The hand of a princess possessing the manual dexterity of Guavcha—unrivalled in the works of the loom and needle—had been eagerly sought by the

wisest and the wealthiest nobles of the land. But wealth and wisdom seemed to make little impression on her; and the fastidious princess, conscious, perhaps, that her charms were of a durable nature, was in no haste to make a selection. But her mind was at length made up, and that somewhat suddenly, being one fine morning nowhere to be found in the paternal domains of Pchat, having been transferred by moonlight on the crupper of his steed to the harem of Tongouse, at Tedjaguz.

To portray the person and equipment of this barbarous Lovelace, (a very appropriate name by the way for a Circassian gallant, who is garnished all over with silver trimmings,) would entirely baffle my feeble powers of description. As far as the habiliments are concerned, it would be impossible to convey any definite idea, for the simple reason that they were never for two days together the same—in casque, mail, and gloves of steel, gallantly armed, at one time—at another, he was undefended, not only against the enemy, but even against the weather, by a threadbare tunic; now, girt with bow and quiver, and now bristling with rifle, dagger, and pistol. At one moment clad in a gay silk anti-er, and a coat resplendent with the silver lace aforesaid—the next he was covered with rags. To day he would meet you on a superb white charger richly caparisoned—to-morrow you

would see him worse mounted than the Knight of the Rueful Countenance himself. Now all these transmutations, which a stranger might unjustly charge to caprice, were in the eyes of the admiring Dely Canus but so many proofs of a brave and liberal spirit. Accoutrements, arms, horses, and slaves themselves, are things which such a hero is proud to part with—for it is presumed to be a proof that his valour can easily replace them.

But though in his outward man the Proteus I have attempted to delineate, there were qualities about Tongouse which he could not change with his coat. For example—however he might be dressed, I never knew him to stand less than six feet three inches in his shoes; and whether in shirt of steel or of Bez, the formidable play of his muscles was the same. Indeed, with regard to the latter, being much addicted to frolics and practical jokes, such as flooring, unhorsing, and riding down his companions, the vigour they exhibited was by many of them deemed even superfluous; whence it was said that the only fit playfellow for Tongouse was his horse; a saying, in a great measure, justified by the terms on which they lived, taking liberties with each other which none but the most intimate friends would venture upon.

At the time Tongouse was presented to us, we were disposed to feel warmly interested in his

favour, by an action of the most gallant description—the most, if not the only brilliant one that had been performed during that campaign, and the credit of which he shared jointly with Djanboulat. In their march from Ghelendjek to Pchat, the Russians had reached a part of the valley presenting a favourable opportunity of attack to their enemies, one which was not neglected by them—a shower of bullets, mixed with “the arrowy sleet of iron war,” rained upon them from the woods on both their flanks. Their only resource, that of most people when caught in a shower, was to run for it. The forces of the Circassians were of course divided, being scattered along the declivities on both sides, and having the enemy and the valley, through which his columns were hastily defiling, between them. The sole plan of the chiefs on such occasions is to make the most of their vantage ground. It was, therefore, with much chagrin that those who were on the left side of the Russians perceived that a post which presented the best opportunity of annoying them had been left wholly unoccupied on the right. As all communication with the opposite bank was temporarily cut off, there appeared to be no means of remedying this omission.

In this emergency, Djanboulat, pointing to the valley with its glittering stream of bayonets below,

asked if there was anybody who dared to cross it with him. The challenge was at once accepted by Tongouse; and the two chieftains, having led their horses down the hill side, in the covert of the trees, were soon mounted and prepared for the enterprise. It was the affair of a minute; even in less time they had raised their battle cry, and cut themselves a passage, to be traced, like that of the thunderbolt, only by the havoc they left behind them.

Tongouse has always shewn a great partiality for the Englishmen that have visited the country. When Mr. Stewart was there, he was bed-ridden, and was scarcely expected to live, having received a dangerous wound in the battle which took place the year before at Semez. He was, at his special desire, conveyed to Mr. Stewart in a litter. His devotion to Mr. Bell and myself was no less remarkable. It was, probably, too flattering to ourselves to allow of our examining too closely into the motives of it, though, had we done so, we should have found them, I think, highly creditable to him. The superiority ascribed to Englishmen in general, as well as the hopes now entertained of England's intervention, had made us very popular, and it was natural that an ardent disposition like his should attach itself, with a chivalrous feeling of loyalty, to persons so honoured and distinguished.

There was another motive, too, which may also have had its influence over him—his former indiscretions and equivocal transactions with his Russian friends he probably thought might be cancelled by the zeal he now displayed in favour of the English. The former had been his bane; the latter he looked upon as his antidote.

CHAPTER XIII.

*My merchandize, and the bartering of my agent—His recovery
Expement of my female slave—Influence of the Koran—
The fugitive recovered—Women in Circassia.*

It having been determined that we should proceed to the house where my merchandize had been deposited, in order to make new arrangements for its safe custody, the chiefs conducted us thither in a body. The goods had been removed about ten miles up the river, and we ascended, therefore, its broad and stony bed, till we halted at an angle, where, as it grew narrower and steeper, we came to the house in question, completely sheltered by a grove of large chesnut-trees that overhung the banks. The distance from the Russian camp was not great, nor the road difficult, and I was advised to remove my stock to some less accessible quarter.

I there found my rascally agent, Imam Oli Hadji, and immediately relieved him from the charge he had shewn such a disposition to abuse. My next task was to examine the merchandize. I found that the salt, partly on account of the difficulty of transporting it, and partly from the knavery of the Hadji, who had given it away in order to make friends for himself, was more than three-fourths gone. I determined, therefore, to make presents of the rest, as, on account of its scarcity, it was the most acceptable thing I could give away. The Circassians depend entirely for their supply on the Turkish traders, and the risk attending the commerce secures a profit of five or six hundred per cent. I had, of course, very little trouble in disposing of it in this way. I declined, however, giving it to those who were importunate, and desired our interpreter to offer it to such of the chiefs whose delicacy prevented them from asking for it. Among these was Mansour, who accepted it very thankfully, it being an article he had long been in want of for the funeral banquet of one of his relations, which had in consequence been delayed. Still he begged I would let him have it privately, lest the donation should create jealousy. We may judge from this incident how very precarious the influence and authority of the most popular chieftains must be. The remainder of the

merchandize, consisting of cotton-piece goods, was duly counted, and I thought by this means I should have a check on the Hadji; but he proved too cunning for me—he had only abstracted a portion from many of the pieces, so that the number appeared complete.

For part of the stock, exchanges had already been effected; they consisted of wax, butter, and fox-skins; and lastly, in lieu of three hundred and fifty pieces of cotton cloth, whose value was now represented by her, a buxom damsel of seventeen. As for the former articles, they were, as far as I could judge, a good investment; but with respect to the latter, I must confess I felt rather puzzled, and meanwhile I proceeded to the harem to take a survey of my property. It proved, as I had been told, a very fair venture, and but for a slight claret tinge on the forehead, which somewhat affected the price, altogether unexceptionable. But the poor creature seemed very much frightened. My villain of a Hadji, finding she was to be taken out of his hands, had, out of sheer malice, been exciting her most vivid apprehensions, telling her we were unbelieving cannibals, from whom she was not to expect the courteous cherishing of honest Mussulmans, but who were sure ultimately, whatever might be her fate in the interim, to roast and pickle her. To pacify her alarms, I withdrew from

the harem, leaving instructions to have her kindly attended to. It appeared, however, from what subsequently occurred, that she had by no means recovered from her fright.

Having satisfactorily, as I thought, adjusted all these matters, I sat down with Mr. Bell and our venerable konag, Shamuz, to our evening repast. The day had been sultry, and our ride over the stones of the Pchat fatiguing; but the foliage, now waving around us in the night breeze, imparted a balmy freshness to the atmosphere; while the rural aspect of our new quarters, contrasting with the warlike appearance of its occupants, presented a scene of mingled interest, at once soothing and exciting to us. The herds, driven in from the pasture, had partly filled the court-yard, scampering hither and thither with a troop of children and dogs at their heels, emulously engaged in the operation of folding them; a number of half-veiled, loosely-clad dowsabels, of truly Amazonian proportions, (reminding me we were actually in the land of the Amazons,) were busily at work over their milk-pails. Mingled with these, reposing on the green sward, collected in clusters, or sauntering about the yard, were the stalwart and martial figures of the mountaineers, some washing their hands and feet for the evening namaz, some engaged in its graceful evolutions, some with their short wooden

pipes in their mouths, some singing, some recounting the day's adventures; for the morning had passed by no means so peacefully as the evening. Among others, our old host had a story for us. The night before, he had been keeping watch in a wood near the Russian pickets; a man of seventy makes but an indifferent sentinel, and it seems he had gradually dropped into a comfortable doze. From this he was aroused, somewhat unpleasantly, by two Cossacks, who were unceremoniously preparing to make a prize of the old gentleman, when he soon convinced them it was a Tartar they had caught; the expedition with which he had whipped out his toasting-iron, and laid about him with it, inducing them to decamp as nimbly as they could.

In this manner had the evening stolen pleasantly and imperceptibly away; the twilight had faded, and been replaced by the stars, in the full brilliancy of an eastern midnight, before we thought of retiring to rest. When at length I had sought my couch, all my invocations to the drowsy god were unavailing. A conspiracy between the fleas within and the frogs and jackals without had effectually banished him from my pillow. To escape at least from one of these plagues, I ordered my bed to be transported out of doors, and to be laid under the projecting eaves of the guest-house. My endeavours to sleep, however, were not a bit

more successful; and I am inclined to think there were moral as well as physical impediments to them. A light yet streamed from the window of the cot where Mr. Bell was then profiting by the tranquillity of the midnight hour to write to his friends in England; whilst I, with the waywardness and indolence which a lazy correspondent will find it easier to understand than account for, lay thinking of those whom I *should* have been writing to, and thus allowing a feeling of remorse to mingle with the sentiments so beautifully expressed by Moore—

“ Oft in the stilly night,
Ere slumber’s chain has bound me,
Fond Memory brings the light
Of other days around me.”

The visions of home and of England were blending strangely with the wild and romantic scene in which they were conjured up; for, vivid as they were, they could not so entirely absorb my contemplations but that they were occasionally diverted to the fireflies dancing in the shadow of the tall trees, or to the dusky forms of the warriors stretched beneath them in their shaggy capotes, or to the hideous concert before mentioned, or to the brilliant chorus of nightingales, or to the discontented growling of the mastiffs, which the presence of so many intruders rendered restless.

But my reveries were destined to be inter-

rupted somewhat rudely. The loud clamour of human voices mingled suddenly with the other noises, and presently the court-yard was a scene of indescribable confusion. The Russians are upon us, I thought; and my first impulse was to spring up and seize my weapons. My supposition was confirmed by the low, stifled cries, Turkish and Circassian, that now rose on every side of me. "Giaour geldi! Giaour geldi!" (the Gaiour! the Gaiour!) and I rushed into the guest-house, where I had left my friend.

The sounds which I had imagined to proceed from many voices proved to be all the performance of my Greek dragoman, speaking his four languages at once; he was, moreover, violently flourishing his drawn scimitar before the bewildered Mr. Bell, who, out of all the words he was uttering, could only make out the Italian one—*femina*, whence it appeared there was a lady in the case. In the meanwhile, the hubbub without had by no means diminished; the report of a rifle rang loud and clear in the court-yard; it was answered by another—and another—and another, each fainter than the previous one. These signals shewed that if the Russians had, contrary to custom, ventured upon a night attack, the Circassians were ready for them, and they would, probably, prove the losers by it. Our apartment was now filled with warriors, armed to the teeth, their wild-looking

faces betraying excitement and eager curiosity, but no alarm. We at length obtained an explanation.

The affair that had occasioned all the tumult, and on that account ridiculous enough, was still to me of rather serious import. I found that the handmaiden with which I had been provided by my Hadji had suddenly made her escape. Demetry, who had succeeded the old rogue in the charge of all the goods, including the fugitive piece, had suspected the foul play to which I have alluded, and had been consequently upon his guard, having made his bed at the very threshold of the lady's apartment. His vigilance had, however, not been proof against his weariness, and having fallen into a nap, which he protested did not last ten minutes, he found, on awaking, and looking into the harem, that the bird had flown. Seven thousand piastres out of his stock had vanished in a twinkling—a loss which the young merchant, both enraged and mortified, swore he would not put up with.

The matter requiring investigation, we now proceeded to the court-yard. Everything there was still in an uproar; the barking of dogs, vociferation of men, and screaming of women, were truly appalling; while the torches of pinewood, flitting about in various directions, cast a red and flickering light over the homestead and surrounding thickets,

(in which a search and pursuit had already commenced,) and enabled us to make out, though somewhat indistinctly, what was going forward. In one part of the yard our enthusiastic friend the gigantic Tongouse was extorting a confession of his villany from the Hadji; he had pinned the old rogue into a corner; with one hand he clutched his beard, and held his drawn cama to his throat with the other. But the most singular and attractive part of the scene was the women, who, huddled in a heap, with their hair dishevelled, and in a dishabille affording a somewhat liberal display of their charms, were exclaiming and gesticulating all at once in a way that seemed perfectly irresistible.

They had been accused, I was told, of being accessory to the flight of the bondwoman, and they had adopted this usual, though not very logical, method of the fair sex in general to establish their innocence. There were some of the spectators, however, whom all their protestations by no means served to convince, and among these incredulous individuals was our old konag, Shamuz, who smoked his pipe very deliberately, and said nothing, except a word in my ear, to the effect that the affair was all right, and my property would be forthcoming immediately. How this was to happen I did not very well understand, particularly as

those who had been in quest of the fugitive now returned, and declared there was no trace of her anywhere. At length, when the ladies, apparently more from want of breath than matter, had come to a pause, Shamuz very coolly ordered a Koran to be brought there, intended, doubtless, for the administration of an oath, and the bare mention of which appeared to throw the fair sisterhood almost into hysterics, and set their tongues a-going with a vehemence and volubility more astounding than ever. They had the strongest objection to such a test being applied to their veracity; but old Shamuz was inexorable, and the oath was accordingly taken. So much virtue existing in an oath I had previously no conception of; it was quite miraculous. Those who had been the loudest in the asseveration of their innocence were now the first to plead guilty, admitting, in a whimpering tone, that they had aided and abetted the escape of the runaway, because what they had heard from the Hadji of our carnivorous propensities had left them to consider it as the only way of rescuing our victim. They had, accordingly, assisted her to elope with the son of the master of the house. This confession was enough for us. I was congratulated on the favourable issue of the affair, and betook myself once more to bed, much comforted with the assurance I received at all

hands, that if the fair deserter was not delivered to me within three days, mine host would have to give me his own daughter, who was much more beautiful, and in every respect a preferable bargain, to say nothing of the fines, seven times her value, in which, as a protégé of their tribe, I should have my share with the Chipakous.

In the course of the next day the fugitives returned, and in consideration of the false alarm which had occasioned their flight, their misconduct was forgiven. The young man took, besides, an oath on the Koran, that the companion of his nocturnal excursion was in no respect the worse for it; in short, that he had no damages to pay, since none had been sustained. The scepticism I might otherwise have felt on this point was in a great measure removed by what I had already seen as to the potency of an oath, and all that I subsequently witnessed with respect to it had the same satisfactory tendency. As to the rebellious dame herself, after the decided repugnance she had shewn to her new lord and master, and after the very extraordinary means I now understood she had adopted to get rid of her first husband, which I shall not further characterize than as equally provoking and unpalatable to him, and which had induced his tribe to sell her into slavery, I was in some perplexity what to do with her. From

this I was a few days afterwards happily relieved by the Circassian merchant, who returned me the merchandize that had been paid for her.

Before I dismiss the subject of this slave transaction, in which, as far as the purchase was concerned, I was decidedly involved against my will, I feel that I am called upon to offer some explanation in extenuation of my conduct to the English reader. The buying and selling of slaves has been constituted a felony by act of parliament, and it may be thought that I have exposed myself by the transaction to a prosecution under it; be this as it may, whatever the verdict might be in a court of law, I feel still more anxious of being acquitted *in foro conscientiae*, by the enlightened and philanthropic class of abolitionists, whose exertions in the cause of humanity can never cease to command our respect till humanity itself be condemned.

With regard to my personal share in the matter, I have only to say, that if the manumission of the slave on my part would have ensured her liberty; if it would have proved either a boon to herself, or been sanctioned by her tribe, I should not have hesitated to set her free. But it would have effected none of these objects; she herself would have been the first to deprecate it, as she wished to be sent to Constantinople; and it was

for this purpose that she had necessitated a divorce from her husband. In the next place, if relinquished by her purchaser, she would have again been at the disposal of her tribe, and all I should have gained by my Quixotism would have been the satisfaction of losing seven thousand piastres by the knavery of the Hadji. So much with respect to myself. As to the system itself, having no intention of setting myself up as its apologist, so, on the other hand, I am not called upon to express unqualified reprobation of it. I shall merely adduce facts, and the inferences that naturally result from them.

As far as I have been able to ascertain, all women in the Caucasus are viewed in the light of property. Whatever may be their rank, whether for home consumption or exportation, they are equally the objects of traffic; not less, indeed, there than elsewhere the incentives to war — *teterrina causa belli*. No woman in Circassia is a free agent or her own mistress; she is either the property of her father or of her husband, and at his death devolves to his tribe, who marry her as they please. It is true that a noble or a freeman can only sell his daughter to a person of his own rank in Circassia; but out of the country, to whom he pleases. This right is never disputed, though it is considered disreputable for an ouzden, or

even a freeman in good circumstances, to sell his children to the slave merchant. The great proportion, therefore, of the women who are exported are of the fourth or servile class, which, as I have already intimated, appears to have consisted originally of prisoners of war. Now these slaves, serfs, or vassals, (in English we have no word to express their condition, and in their usual acceptation none of these will exactly apply,) are entitled to half of the fruits of their industry, be they agricultural, pastoral, or domestic; and among other productions, their children are, of course, included. If a sale, therefore, be effected, the parent divides the proceeds with the master, or, if he chooses, he may prevent the sale; the consent of both parties being requisite for it. I have known many instances where the serf has refused to part with his child on any terms that were offered for her. When the girls are sold to the slave merchant, it is generally at their own desire, and from ambitious motives, as they have the prospect of an advantageous settlement in the best harems in Turkey. Their views in this respect are much the same as those of our young ladies who are shipped from England to India; but the place of *their* destination is not so distant, being only a few days' sail; nor does their disposal in this way at all infer a permanent separation

from their friends; on the contrary, it enables them frequently to be of service to them.

An Englishman who was desirous of emancipating one of these beauties, and taking her with him to England, failed in the attempt, although he offered three times her regular price—because her friends were afraid that if she went to England they would have no opportunity of communicating with her, and she would be entirely lost to them. Another inducement with the Circassians for parting with their children to the Turks is, the belief that they will have the benefit of a superior education and religious instruction. Their condition is no doubt greatly ameliorated, and so far from becoming slaves by the transfer, it opens to them their only chance of freedom, which marriage will secure to them in Turkey,* though not in Circassia. Freedom, however, is the last thing they take into consideration; the comparative comfort, luxury, and grandeur which await them at Constantinople are the objects that powerfully excite their imaginations in perspective, and which reconcile them to expatriation when possessed. We

* Every married woman is, according to the statutes of the Koran, free; she can hold property in her own right, possesses her rights and privileges, and may prosecute her husband in the courts of law for the breach of them. Every female slave, or *Alaic*, acquires, on becoming a mother, the same right.

never hear of any of them, though many are free to choose their residence, revisiting their native mountains. They are no more troubled with Nostalgia than a country girl who has been metamorphosed into a fine lady, and who, whatever her reminiscences of her dairy and spinning-wheel, never thinks of returning to them. I should mention here, that one of the great recommendations of the Circassian belle in the bazaar of Constantinople is, her skill as a housewife, for which she is chiefly prized in her native country, and which, when adorned with the graces and accomplishments of the Turkish khanoum, makes her a preferable acquisition to the indolent and languishing Georgian. On their arrival at Constantinople, the fair Circassians are placed for two or three years in establishments superintended by experienced matrons, and in many respects corresponding with our finishing schools. Their education there has reference to the manners and etiquette so strictly observed in the Turkish harem, and frequently extends to reading and writing, and a knowledge of Arabic and Persian literature.

In these particulars, as well as in others I could point out, the women of Circassia may find some consolation for their apparently degraded position; besides, if they be held in the light of property, property, we know, is of various kinds. The

denomination of treasure would perhaps prove less objectionable ; certain it is that the care and solicitude with which they are treated are by no means diminished by the consideration of their exchangeable value. Nothing we told the Circassians of our English customs astonished and amused them more than the fact, that instead of having to pay a large sum for a wife, the bachelor expected a fortune with her corresponding to his own. This to them was "gilding refined gold, and adding perfume to the violet." With them, as in the patriarchal times, when Jacob submitted to years of laborious probation for his Rachael, woman is an object worthy *per se* of the greatest sacrifices. Raise her, however, to independence and equality, and the bargain is no longer *for* her, but *with* her : as our friends facetiously remarked, it then seemed to be as much her object to buy a husband as his to purchase a wife.

Thus valued and cherished as the dearest object of possession, woman, strange as it may appear, is, in the relative position of the sexes, not only regarded as an inferior, but condemned by the customs of the country to a daily and studied manifestation of that inferiority. To rise on his entrance into the room is a mark of respect due from the most high-born dame to the lowest hind in Circassia. Another tribute no less rigidly

exacted is, the ceremony observed when people of different sexes meet upon the road. I have frequently, in our promenades or rides, been not a little scandalized to see the women we chanced to encounter submissively make way for us, and stand, with downcast eyes, and hands meekly folded before them, till we had passed. To me, at least, whatever the effect on their haughtier mates, the dominion of beauty seemed never so absolute as when stooping in this lowly guise to conquer; and I have fancied that the character of that beauty, "the eyes' blue languish, and the golden hair," so justly assigned to them by Collins, lent itself peculiarly to that graceful humility.

This palpable subjection of the sex in the Caucasus is easily accounted for. It arises from the very nature of its attributes, those of softness and sensibility, which, in general, meet with little sympathy among a nation of warriors. Not that they object to these gentler qualities in their women; on the contrary, they would be the first to deprecate their absence; all that they fear is, their enervating influence; and what they require is, that the possessors of them should be distinguished, and that in no very flattering manner, from those who naturally inherit the hardihood of body and the heroism of mind which it is the primary object of their institutions to fortify and develope. Na-

ture, they conceive, has destined them to different pursuits, and to these they think they should strictly confine themselves; while the men would disdain to meddle with the loom or the needle, the care of infants, &c., they would deem it equally preposterous for the women to appear either in the council or the field. A writer who has lately fabricated a work on Circassia, in no instance betrays his ignorance with respect to it more than when he asserts some of them carry poniards and pistols at their girdles. So far from sporting ornaments like these, they are even debarred from the exercises which, in other parts of the east, are common to both sexes, but which are here considered exclusively masculine. Once only in her life a woman is mounted on horseback, and that is when she is carried off on the war horse of her bridegroom's Achates from her father's dwelling.

It seems chiefly, then, for the conservation of the warlike spirit so essential to their existence as a nation that the Circassians seek to repel the moral influence of the softer sex. Indeed, from the systematical precautions against it, it would appear almost, that, could the iron race be perpetuated without its intervention, it would be dispensed with altogether. Like the Spartan of old, the Circassian only visits his wife by stealth, and, to the fruits of these stolen interviews, to his chil-

dren, he is forbidden the slightest manifestation of tenderness.* His boys are banished at an early age from the paternal roof to that of the fosterfather, or *ataluk*, that no parental indulgence may interfere with the austerity of their education. But, though perhaps the great object in its establishment, hardihood is not the sole result of this discipline. I have more than once alluded to the strong social feeling that seems to unite the Circassians into one family. May not this in some measure have been obtained at the expense of the domestic affections? Restricted in their narrower circle, may not these expand and be absorbed in a wider and more elevated sphere?

As a proof that they were guided by some such principle, (or the belief, perhaps, that it is only in the conjugal state, when fairly domesticated, that their mettle may be endangered,) I must not forget

* The institutions of the Circassians naturally suggest a comparison with those of the Lacedemonians. With the latter, the same object was promoted by different means. To check effeminacy among the men, the women spontaneously unsexed themselves, and became viragos. Lycurgus sought to reform this abuse, but failed in the attempt. Were he now living, he would find his own system in active operation among the tribes of the Caucasus. In the days of chivalry, the warlike spirit was fostered by a similar sacrifice of womanhood on the part of the sex, who were constituted umpires in the sanguinary contests of the lists.

to add that the reserve displayed between man and wife is contrasted in the strongest manner by their unconstrained demeanour before marriage. When women have become the exclusive property of a husband, their duty requires that they should carefully veil their persons, and scrupulously guard their behaviour; for his honour would be compromised by the most trifling indiscretion on their part. Till such appropriation has taken place, the deference they are taught to the other sex in general renders them tolerant of freedoms not altogether consistent with our notions of propriety. The man, on the other hand, appears not wholly unsoftened by this complaisance; nor does the general treatment of their women, harsh and authoritative as it may appear, preclude some rude attempts at gallantry, imparting to their manners a tinge—though somewhat faint it must be allowed—of the age of chivalry. It is the custom at their festivals for the young men, when pledging their sweethearts in a bowl of *boza*, to fire off their pistols or rifles. The challenge is immediately accepted by all who have a charge of gunpowder, (scarce as the article may be just now,) to assert in the same manner the superior charms of their own mistresses.

Another practice on these occasions is, for those who contend in the race to receive the prize from some fair damsel, “the cynosure of neighbouring

eyes," consisting of an ornamented pistol-cover, or scarf, the work of her own delicate fingers. The latter, I am sorry to say, in the hard times superinduced by the Russian war, is too often represented by a rag of red calico, which he who receives it first carries off with him streaming gallantly in the wind, as he endeavours, with his horse at full speed, and by every resource of horsemanship, to elude the pursuit of the other cavaliers. The one who overtakes him is, in his turn, the bearer of these *opima spolia*, and he who finally prevails, their happy possessor.

To conclude these hasty and imperfect remarks, which I am afraid will leave an unfavourable impression with the English reader as to the position of women in Circassia, I should add, among other extenuating circumstances, that absolute as their dependence may appear to be, and undoubtedly is, it seldom interferes with the exercise of a free choice in marriage; provided the suitor can pay the price at which she is estimated, and be of the proper rank, his addresses are rarely rejected by the parents of his mistress.

Au reste, the independence of the sex under European institutions, which, indeed, it would be treason to an Englishman to impugn, may be attended with its drawbacks and disadvantages. It might be odious further to allude to them, if

the absence of them, under a different *regime*, did not prove that, like every other refinement of European civilization, the independence of the sex is not obtained for nothing. For the unhappy victims of their independence (whose name with us is Legion) that civilization is accountable. These at least might envy the position of their sex, degraded, as it may appear, in Circassia. There, every woman lives under protection of some sort or another, which, though she may be transferred or sold for misconduct, she can never forfeit. Her infamy almost invariably involves that of her protector; and it is this circumstance that attaches so peculiar a stigma to the name of Pandar all over the East.

CHAPTER XIV.

The Russian camp at Ghelendjek—Reconnoitring—Bay of Semez—Authentic account of the circumstances attending the illegal seizure of the “Vixen.”

SINCE the arrival of the Russians at Pchat, where they had been quartered three weeks, there had, with the exception of a few skirmishes, been an entire suspension of hostilities. Defended by the entrenchments they had thrown up there, they shewed little disposition to harass the Circassians by incursions in the interior of the country. Their immediate object was to construct a fort on the coast, and their supplies were, in the meanwhile, conveyed to them by sea. To judge by the progress they had made in their task, it seemed probable that it could not be finished

within another month; and the chiefs came to the resolution of breaking up their forces till the enemy should recommence his march. They had already been collected longer than usual, nor could the valley of Pchat any longer provide for their support. The inhabitants were willing enough to dispense with their assistance, and undertook with their rifles to keep the foraging party in check.

We had proposed to the war-council to storm one of the other fortresses, Ghelendjek or Aboon, while the army was occupied with the new erection at Pchat, but they did not relish the suggestion. On the contrary, they seemed disposed to remain quiet, as long as they were themselves unmolested by the Russians. These pacific dispositions arose, I believe, chiefly from the communication made to them by Lord Ponsonby. They had made the propositions, in the manner prescribed to them, to the Russian general; and his answer to them, with the unfavourable result of the negotiations, had been forwarded by Nogai Ismael, the bearer of the despatch to them from Sefer Bey.

Nogai had been detained by unfavourable winds on the coast, and I saw him once more before his departure. My object was to ascertain, if possible, what had been his views in maligning us to his countrymen. He had completely failed in his amiable purpose, and therefore, with a spirit of plac-

bility, Circassian rather than Christian, considering my motive, I offered him a present on condition he would explain the grounds of his previous hostility. My proposal was met with equal candour on his side. The author of the injurious reports he had spread against us was, as I suspected, Mr. Urquhart's discarded dragoman, and his own motive for giving them currency had been no less vindictive.

As Mr. Urquhart may probably be at a loss to understand how he could have offended this man, I shall take this opportunity of informing him. In passing through Stamboul, on his way from Adrianople, he had, like all the Circassians who came there, waited upon Daoud Bey at his Jäly, to offer his homage. Agreeably to the policy adopted by some of them, of fishing for large presents with small, he had given to Mr. Urquhart a part of his arms, and in return had been presented with a pair of English pistols. Not aware of their value, which was at least ten times what he supposed it to be, he had felt a good deal exasperated against Mr. Urquhart, and, unable to wreak it on him, he determined to punish those whom he conceived to be his proxies. Thus Mr. Bell and myself, had he succeeded, would have been the victims of an erroneous valuation.

Among other arrangements, it had been decided

that we should spend the ensuing month, while the Russians remained here, at the house of our konag, Keri Oglu Shamuz Bey. It was situated in the bay of Semez, (called, by mistake, in the map, Soudjouk), which had been the scene of the Vixen's capture. Mr. Bell had already resided there previously to my joining him. But before we left the environs of Pchat, we were desirous of taking a nearer survey of the Russian encampment, and we accordingly obtained the escort of a band of Dely Canns, headed by Nogai Indar Oglu, and our friend Tongouse, "The Wolf."

Nogai was the eldest son of Mehemet, of whom I have repeatedly spoken. He was absent during my first visit to Pchat, and was introduced to me about this time. He was reputed to be one of the best warriors of Natukvitch, nor was his reputation belied by his personal attributes. His frame was tall, powerful, and compact, and though rather lame, in consequence of a wound in the leg, he possessed great activity. He had a hawk's eye and foxy beard, and, to do him justice, had a good deal both of the hawk and the fox in his composition; still was he brave, courteous, and hospitable; in short, a thorough Circassian.

Attended by this gallant train, we once more descended the river, and after two hours' ride fell in with the Circassian sentinels, who were hover-

ing on every side of the Russian camp, in order that no movement might escape their observation. Nogai, followed by two others, now darted forward at full speed to reconnoitre the front of the enemy's position. It was concealed from us by a piece of rising ground, round which the Pchat formed rather an abrupt angle as it flowed to the sea between two headlands, at the distance of about half a mile from each other. It was at the bottom of this valley, on the beach, that the Russians were entrenched, and engaged in the construction of their fort. Nogai, who had disappeared behind the eminence, now presented himself once more on it, beckoning us with his hand to advance. On reaching this place, we alighted from our horses, and proceeded cautiously down the valley till we reached a cenotaph of huge stones, such as I have formerly described, and crouching behind this we had a full view of the Russian lines, extending in front of us within cannon range. How altered was the scene from what it had been when I landed there! The woods, full of aromatic plants, and vocal with nightingales, through whose umbrageous pathways I had ridden not a month ago, had all been swept away, with the habitations they concealed. But if the ruthless destruction of all that had adorned the valley was afflicting to a stranger, who had

been momentarily impressed by its beauties, what must it have been to those whose feelings had been associated with it from earliest infancy, who, in the place of their familiar haunts and old hereditary trees, where they and their forefathers had sat in council, now gazed on the tents of the destroyers !

These were pitched in long white rows, and in front of them the men were drawn up in line, at dinner, with their bayonets piled up within reach, in case of an alarm. Before them was a trench and rampart studded all over with guns, and behind them the sea, with half-a-dozen transports, tossing in the roadstead. The ships of war, not finding safe anchorage there, had all returned to Ghelendjek. The flanks of this position were covered by the two promontories, on which strong outposts had been placed. As near as we could ascertain, the number of troops within these lines amounted to 18,000. The deserters reported that this campaign had already cost them 2,000 men. Disease and desertion had effectually assisted the Circassians to thin their ranks. Occupied with this spectacle, for with our telescopes we could distinctly observe all that was passing in the camp, I had not remarked the departure of Tongouse, and was surprised to see him emerge from a hollow, close under the batteries. Accompanied by his

squire, he sped swiftly on his white charger, almost within musket shot, and apparently with the intention of reconnoitring what the Muscovs had got for dinner. The latter, it seems, did not relish this intrusion. We could hear the drums beating, and presently the whole line was under arms; but before their guns could be brought to bear on the audacious intruders, they had disappeared in the ravine, and the men had not yet resumed their meal, when, shouting with laughter at the success of the frolic which he had played off for our amusement, Tongouse was again at our side.

We returned that evening to the same house, and the next morning set out for Semez. We passed, on the way, the place in the hills where Mehemet Indar Oglu had taken an asylum with his family. We had an interview with the old ouzden, during which he entreated us, and we on our part promised to use our endeavours, to heal the dissensions existing between him and the other chiefs.

We put up that evening at a house which, from its secluded situation, overhanging a waterfall in the recesses of a mountain glen, had been fixed upon as the depot for the merchandize. It belonged to three brothers, one of whom had been the ataluk of my friend Islam Gheri Indar Oglu, whose family became responsible for the safety of

the goods. I left my Greek dragoman and a Circassian agent jointly in charge of them ; but, foreseeing it was likely we should remain some time in the country, and that we might want them for our personal expenses, I put a stop to all further exchanges.

Our route to Semez, as far as the valley of Hyderbey, was the same as I had previously travelled by ; but it had been much improved since my journey to Adheucum, the Russians having had to make a road for their artillery. It ran along the side, and sometimes in the bed, of the stream, from the stones of which it had been chiefly put together, cemented also, in no scanty measure, as we could gather from innumerable evidences on the way, with the life blood of the workmen. The trees, in every winding of the valley, bore witness to the iron tempest by which they had been assailed. On one broad-breasted oak alone I counted the marks of more than thirty balls. Our companions were anxious we should understand that it was not by their rifles that the trees had been so severely wounded ; they are not in the habit of throwing away their shot, and seldom fire, unless sure of their aim. I could see, also, that the balls had been carefully extracted from the wood, and I apprehend their chief supply is obtained in this manner. On the trunks of

many of the trees, crosses, sabres, and other devices, had been newly carved, indicating that officers had been interred at their feet. These sylvan monuments were scattered along the whole line of march. In other places were found barrows, containing heaps of the vulgar slain, who had been buried there indiscriminately. The more open parts of the valley presented, also, recent traces of encampments—black spots, where the herbage had been burnt by the fires of the bivouacs, and upright stakes for the picquets. Here and there might be seen the ruins of cottages, and I was told they had generally been destroyed by the inhabitants themselves on the approach of an enemy; but this had only been done in the most exposed situations; and the house where we took lodging for the night was scarcely at a quarter of a mile distance from the road.

On the way side, in the spot where there had been the hardest fighting in the march to Pchat, was a large wooden frame, quaintly carved, and painted red, which had been erected over the body of a chief who had fallen while heading a charge there.

The next day, as we were advancing along the pleasant valley of Hyderbey, we were met by a party of cavaliers, who proposed, if we chose, to

accompany us that day to the heights above, where we should have a view of the bay and fort of Ghelendjek. The Russian castles, I perceived, were looked upon as the chief curiosities in Circassia; and, oddly enough, they shewed them to strangers as if they were proud of them, and, all things rightly considered, they had perhaps reason to be so. What were they after all, but so many monuments of Russian weakness, which, instead of commanding the country, were invested by it—jails for their own soldiery—whence the wretches immured in them escaped, as often as they could, to the mountaineers, who were thus enriched by a great annual accession to their serfs. The possession of these constitutes their chief wealth: land may be had to any extent for nothing; hands alone are wanted to cultivate it; and these the yeomen in the neighbourhood of the castle had only to take possession of, in the persons of the deserters. A number of Dely Canns were constantly lurking there on the watch, in order to be the first to welcome them, and receive their arms; and we have frequently met them marching home their newly-acquired property, stiff pug-nosed gawkies, in Russian uniform. The mountains above Ghelendjek I have before described. They rise precipitously, folding inwards, in the form of a horse-shoe. The way to the top was circuitous

and toilsome. It was for the most part through deep thickets, but we every now and then came to an open *plateau*, that afforded a delightful resting place, where sheep and goatherds, bearing rifles instead of crooks, were leading, not driving, their flocks (for such is the custom) to pasture.

From the shadowy depths of the valley, we at length emerged on the breezy summits, and then scaled the highest peak of the mountains—the aerial watch-tower of the Circassians. The coast beneath is of a grander and more indented character than in any other part; stretching far into the sea in wooded promontories, and opening for its admission in a series of beautiful bays. But that which now gave a peculiar interest to the coast, spread like a chart at our feet, was, that while the eye followed its windings, it also took in the entire operations for its investment by sea and land of the Muscovite—well nigh all that had hitherto been done for the subjugation of Circassia was before us: standing, with her free sons and gallant defenders, on these her mountain ramparts, we could see and laugh to scorn the lilliputian efforts of those who were seeking to shackle her. Far to the south-east was the bay of Pchat, where the army of Willemineff was swarming like so many ants about their newly created fort. Djamhote, advancing with its bold cliffs, and waving

forests, far into the sea, separated them from the harbour of Ghelendjek, which formed a regular and capacious basin of more than two miles in diameter, immediately beneath us; there, safe from the winds that make the Black Sea so dangerous, and which a year later blew one-half of them on the coast, the Russian shipping, men-of-war and transports, were all at anchor, a lowering sky having at once broken up the blockade and sent them into the bay for refuge.

Ghelendjek has, in point of security, the advantage of Semez, which is unprotected from the south. At the eastern side of the bay was the fort. It was built in 1833, and is the principal military depot, and, with the exception of Anapa, the largest and most important station on the coast; but the garrison, consisting of a thousand men, were here, as elsewhere, kept close prisoners by the Circassians. The wall is of earth, and the houses and magazines of wood. They were all, during this campaign, destroyed by fire. The coast to the north-west from Ghelendjek, consisting of high chalk cliffs, after turning an acute point, forms a deep recess, in the corner of which, called by the natives Doba, are incarcerated a hundred more unfortunate Russians. The small castle where they are cooped up is the only one, with the exception of Anapa, built of stone. From

the elevation where we now stood, it was scarcely visible to the naked eye, and through our glasses had the look of a sentry-box.

The coast runs about six miles further to the north-west, where it forms the bay of Semez; the intervening space is altogether impassable to troops, being occupied by the mountains, which sweep in long ridges and ravines down to the very cliffs. From the height of the bay of Semez, which is thus separated by distance, and the broken nature of the ground, from Doba, the shore, which is on this side comparatively flat and shelving, sweeps again in a southward direction, encompassing the bay with a round low cape. In the centre of this, on the sea-side, are the ruins of the old Turkish castle of Soudjouk, or Soudjouk-Kalé.

I have been thus minute in the description of this locality, because it forms the scene of a memorable event, one which, I trust, no Englishman has forgotten, and for which, please God, the day of reckoning will yet arrive: it was with no ordinary emotion that I then gazed on the scene of the Vixen's capture. Mr. Bell, who was riding at my side, entered into the details of that audacious outrage, and, in the certainty I then felt that retribution was following close on the heels of it, I repressed my indignation, and felt even a degree of satisfaction in listening to them.

The most remarkable incident in this disgraceful affair was, the consternation betrayed by the Russians themselves. The striking of the British flag to their own was a profanation which filled them with dismay—a sacrilegious jest which they felt they might dearly expiate. Captain Wolf, of the *Ajax*, earnestly entreated Captain Childs to hoist his flag again, but Childs, with the downright good feeling of an English sailor, refused to do any such thing. He felt that he, his crew, his ship, and cargo, were the degraded spoil of the Muscovite, and over such the banner of the free and invincible could no longer fly. He scorned the shadow of respect when the substance had been denied to him. However my Lords Palmerston and Durham may prize such a mockery of homage, Childs was not to be cajoled with it,—he said he would be d—d if he would hoist his flag.

Childs acted with the spirit of a Briton throughout: Lords Palmerston and Durham have acted like—no matter what; their conduct, which, for the reparation of the national honour, requires exposure, will render every epithet and comment superfluous. Both these ministers, instead of deliberately investigating this aggression, with a view to a full and rigid satisfaction of it,—and in a question like this they should have cavilled for

the ninth part of a hair,—actually seem to have been anxious from the beginning to supply Russia with subterfuges and excuses for it—excuses which she herself repudiated, for she knew them to be altogether untenable.

In the first place, Lord Durham, who wished to justify the seizure of the Vixen on the ground of the *de facto* and military occupation of the port where it took place, prevails upon Nesselrode to write a note stating that there was a Russian fort in the bay of Soudjouk-Kalé, called Alexandrinsky, the name of the sister of the emperor. Now, having been resident for some months on the spot myself, it having been, in fact, our head-quarters, I think I may be permitted to be as competent and impartial a witness as Count Nesselrode at St. Petersburg, when I declare, as I am ready to do, upon oath, that there are no such bay and no such fort as those of Soudjouk-Kalé in existence. There did formerly exist a Turkish castle of that name, but it was abandoned in 1816, and is now a heap of ruins; and, as the name itself implies, could never have referred to the bay, which is only known to the Circassians by that of Semez. Soudjouk-Kalé signifies, literally, sausage-fort.

The nearest Russian castle to the bay of Semez, where the Vixen was captured, is the one constructed by the Russians at Dobá, and named, as

Count Nesselrode states, Alexandrinsky, after the sister of the emperor. Now, from that which has been named by the Turks after a sausage—whose ruins are situated at Semez, and which, while we resided there, was a favourite place of resort to us, Alexandrinsky is not only at a distance of several leagues,—in fact, almost out of sight,—but, as I have already intimated, completely isolated by the mountainous nature of the intervening coast. We, who resided at Semez, should have as soon dreamt of an attack from Constantinople, as of being molested by the garrison of Alexandrinsky, who, since its erection in 1835, had remained snug in their nook of the mountains at Doba. To have admitted the legality of the capture, on the ground of military occupation, exhibits the most culpable negligence, and a wilful blindness to the whole transaction, from which it appears that Mr. Bell, the captain and crew of the *Vixen*, were in free and unrestrained communication with the Circassians for two days, and that this was finally interrupted, not by the garrison of Alexandrinsky, or of any other fort, or by any land force whatever, but by the arrival of a ship of war, the *Ajax*, from Ghelendjek, which, keeping at a respectful distance from the Circassians, only ventured to menace and coerce the English vessel.

If to these any further proof of the non-occupation of Semez at that period be required, I have to add the fact, that at this very moment (two years after the capture of the Vixen) the Russians are engaged in constructing three forts near the site of the old Turkish fort, Soudjouk-Kalé—the sausage, into the empty remnant of which Lord Durham would have had the bad taste to cram the fort named after the sister of the emperor—poor Alexandrinsky.

But what signifies a little confusion in places and dates—the transposition of a fort or two—to serve a friend! The emperor had unexpectedly patronized the radical peer, and to his fire-new zeal and gratitude, such things were trifles; the interests of our commerce, the rights of his country, the honour of her flag, still more contemptible!

So much for Lord Durham's attempt to prove the Russian's *de facto* occupation of this portion of the coast. Lord Palmerston, to shew her *de jure* possession, is full as ingenious and successful. His solicitude not to obtain redress for this atrocious act of spoliation from Russia, but to induce the people of England to kiss the rod she had extended to them, is quite as exemplary. Could he have persuaded them to make a present to her of the whole coast, on her right to which, as

I shall presently explain, she herself had justified the seizure, it would have saved him a world of trouble and falsification. But despairing of this, he resorts to the expedient of proving her title to the particular part where it took place. The Sultan, he infers, had no right to cede what did not belong to him, but only that of which he was the *bona fide* possessor. Soudjouk-Kalé, he triumphantly discovers, must have been a Turkish fort, and that it was somewhere in the neighbourhood of it that the Vixen was seized. All this, however, proves nothing; for though it be true Soudjouk-Kalé was a Turkish fortress, it is no less true that it was razed and abandoned in 1790, full thirty-eight years before the treaty of Adrianople, and was consequently no more the Sultan's to give away than the rest of the coast. It has, moreover, only been just now occupied by the Russians—i. e., nine years after the conclusion of the treaty, and two years after the capture and confiscation of the Vixen.

Another fact, also, which must not be overlooked, is, that the Sultan never pretended to an inch of ground beyond the walls of the fortress, and, consequently, even supposing he had not abandoned it, had never a right to cede anything else. The question, of course, is not what he did cede, but what he had a right to cede, under the

peculiar difficulties he found himself in when he signed the treaty of Adrianople. There is no doubt that, had he been required, he would have made over to Russia as much territory as she pleased, even in the sun and moon, which, indeed, being in the eastern phraseology, their whether, he had more right to dispose of than Circassia. But the fact is, in the official documents that have been published on the subject, it does not appear that the Russian minister makes any mention of Soudjouk-Kalé, either as a port or a fortress.

The confusion and prevarication on this point are wholly attributable to the British ministers. Count Nesselrode, in his note of the 9th May, states that the Vixen had been seized and confiscated, "*parce qu'il est entré avec une cargaison de contrebande dans un port appartenant à la Russie, en vertu du traité d'Adrianople,*" evidently alluding to the fourth article of that treaty, which places under Russian sway "*tout le littoral de la Mer Noire depuis l'embouchure de Kouban jusqu'au port de St. Nicolas inclusivement.*" Now, as the above article gives him a pretty considerable latitude, he naturally feels perfectly indifferent what the port in question may be called; though, out of compassion to our ministers, who are anxious to find some pretext for pocketing this disgrace, he

permits them, if they please, to call it Soudjouk-Kalé. The real and only question, then, between the governments, and which the former had not the manliness to face, is, whether Russia be or be not rightful mistress of the coast of Circassia, and whether the few straggling forts she has erected there, and which, as I have before stated, are but so many jails for her own soldiery, entitle her to prevent our trading with its independent inhabitants?

As to the existing commerce of the country, and its future capabilities, the first is considerable, and the latter, I believe, immense. But this is a subject which must not be lightly dismissed, and I shall therefore reserve it for another chapter. The extent, however, to which our commerce may be carried on here in no way affects the principle at stake; if we abandon that, character, influence, and all that they command, including commerce itself, will abandon us.

Leaving behind us the mountain tops, with the boundless view of the sea and sea-coast they commanded, we once more sought the shelter of the valley beyond. The house of our host for the night, a rich toçav, was situated towards the bottom of it. He had with his own hands given to the flames, on the approach of the Russians, not a month before, the cots he formerly occupied in the centre of the valley. He seemed already to

have made himself quite at home in his new locality, where the usual accessories of wood and water left him nothing to regret. His harem, outhouses, folds, and granaries, had been, with the assistance of neighbours, already constructed. The guest-house was not yet quite completed; it yet wanted its coat of plaister, inside and out, and resembled a square cage of wickerwork; still it served very well for a summer-house; and the cheerful alacrity with which the whole establishment set about administering to our comforts, strewing the floor with fresh leaves, as a preservative against fleas, and spreading their neat mats,* cushions, and sofas, amply made up for all deficiencies. Nor should the banquet we sat down to pass without honourable mention.

The next morning we pursued our route eastward by the track of streams, wandering in depths of shadowy defiles, and at length ascended the hills again. But the point at which we now beheld the sea was several leagues distance to the N. E. from our prospect of the day before. The bay of Pchat was completely, and the harbour of Ghelendjek partially, screened from our view. The Gulf of Semez lay beneath us, while, included with it in the same magnificent frame of mountains, the valley of that name, where we were

* The Circassians excel in the workmanship of mats, and export many of them to Turkey.

now to take up our residence, extended far to the right. I may be pardoned, perhaps, for dwelling too minutely on this picture. A residence at Semez of several months, during which we not only learnt to sympathize strongly with the hopes and fears of its inhabitants, but were associated with them in their domestic relations, frequenting their social hearths, sitting at their feasts, and attending their councils, have left all its features indelibly impressed on my memory.

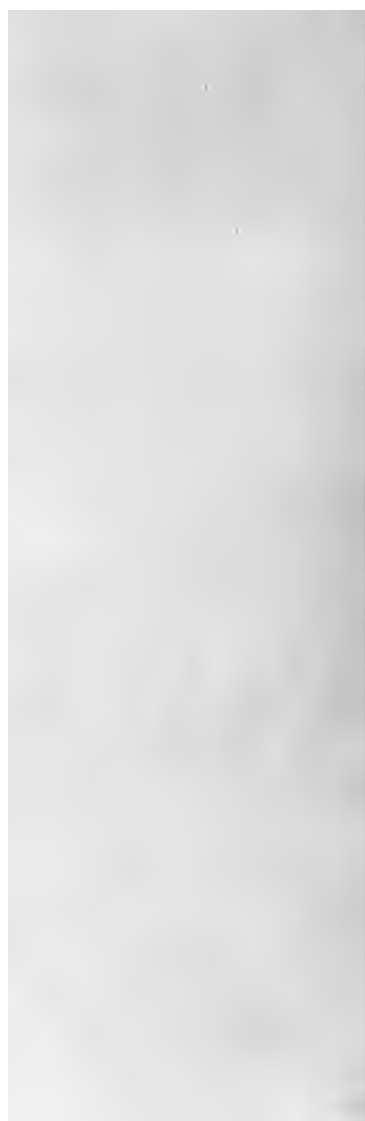
Eight miles in length, two in breadth, it was divided by a forest of stately trees, sweeping down the centre, and growing denser in its array of giant oaks as it descended almost to the beach; for the stream which gave its name to the valley was there swallowed up in a swamp, producing a rank luxuriance of vegetation, and a miasma by no means conducive to the health of the inhabitants. It was, therefore, in this part, almost uninhabited; and amidst the enormous moss-grown cairns to be found in its gloomy recesses, superstition had her legends of demon-guarded treasures. But higher up the valley, where the stream was pure and unimpeded in its course, the forest had everywhere yielded to the inroads of cultivation, opening wide into sunny glades, pastures, and cornfields, and betraying, by the smoke that curled over them, even where its ranks were thickest, the domestic oasis in its bosom. It was

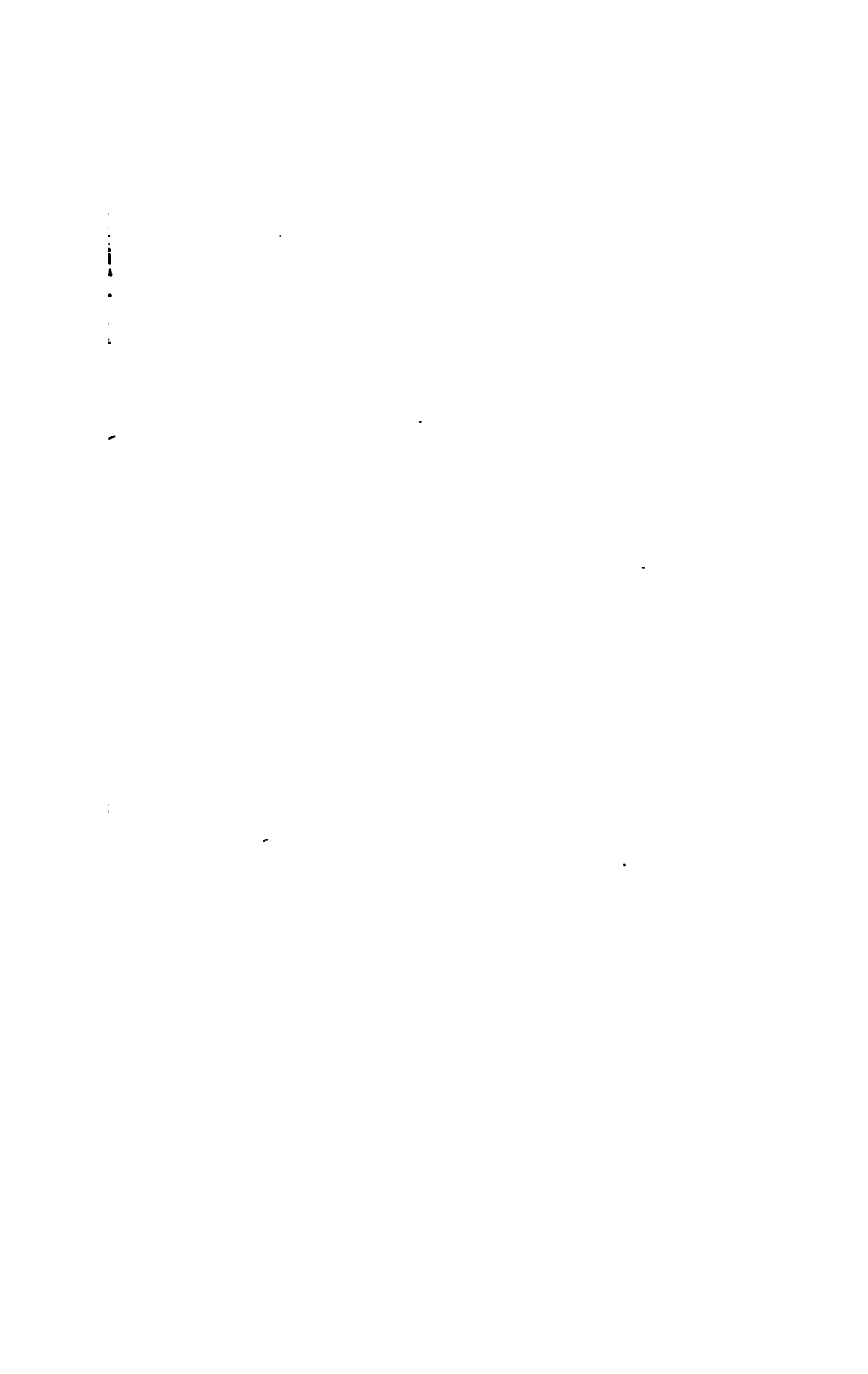
chiefly, however, in the glens and gorges, winding into the very heart of the mountains on either side, that the dwellings of our friends were situated. Thus fortified by these mighty bulwarks, heaving and towering all around it, some of them commanding at the same time a view of Anapa, some of the plains of the Kuban, and some looking far over the beleaguered waters of the Euxine, the valley of Semez, though in the very midst of the Russian lines, armies, and fleets, presented to the eye a picture of repose, a little Arcadia of pastoral beauty, with nothing to disturb the feeling of security it inspired, but, in its remote and opposite corner of the gulf, the castle of Alexandrinsky. But whatever it might appear to a stranger, to the Semezians it had long since lost even the effect of a scarecrow; nor could it be regarded as an eyesore to their valley, since, from the greater part of it, it was to the naked eye invisible.

During our residence there, we were never under the slightest apprehension of an attack from Doba, nor indeed from Anapa, which, though entirely hidden by the mountains, was as near to us on the other side, and contained a garrison at least ten times as numerous. The previous year, however, Willemineff, after a fruitless excursion to Westagoi, descended with an army of twelve thousand men over the pass of Tchogatlos to Semez,

keeping as much as he could in the open and central part of the valley. Having lost a great number of men; while the injury he inflicted was very trifling, he retreated by the same way he had advanced.

From the hills, we descended, through the woods that clothed their sides, to the margin of cliffs, along which, leaving Doba three miles behind us, we rode by a bridle way that only admitted our party one by one, in Indian file. A ride of five miles brought us to the beach in the interior of the bay. We then struck into the forest, making our way occasionally with great difficulty through the morass. On reaching the further side of the forest, we alighted at a cottage on its skirts. It was inhabited by a Turkish merchant, Hafiz, who received us very civilly. After partaking of refreshments, we proceeded by a winding way through a country composed of pasture enclosures, with hawthorn bushes, dwarf oaks, and here and there a flush of wild flowers, round the projecting foot of a hill, till, at the mouth of the ravine, well covered as usual with clumps of trees, we came to the house of Keri Oglu Shamuz Bey. Our horses were tied to the boughs, and we hung up our arms in the residence that had been prepared.







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